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BIOGRAPHY

Alcoolique, syphilitique, pédéraste, poète

By Alistair Elliot

PIERRE PETITFILS:
Verlaine
508pp. Paris: Julliard.

Legends apart, what was Verlaine like? His first biographer, Charles Morice, recalled a night in the winter of 1882-83 when he and Léo Trézennik read Verlaine the whole of Corbière's *Les Amours Jaunes*. It lains for a similar context: showing, but at been aroused by a few quotations from memory, but the two young men felt they couldn't lead him the book, which didn't belong to them. "From the beginning to the end, Verlaine did not stop laughing, and in the most moving and poignant passages his laugh actually interrupted us: it was laughter mixed with tears. And this laughter, a natural expression of enthusiasm from his impulsive and divinely child-like spirit, was so beautiful that we admired it for itself, like a poem." Verlaine would then have been about thirty-nine, but he still had the laugh, "presque aussi neuf qu'un rire d'enfant", ten years later, when the shy young Valéry saw him burst from his grotesque *antre* or to the Paris street, raging like Polyphemus and babbling his cudgel on the pavement, a brutal majesty.

Many other observers saw this engagingly childlike side of Verlaine; tremendous numbers of people of all kinds were fond of him, from literary acquaintances to hospital ward-mates. Partly this was how he saw himself—he often expressed puzzlement to those nearer to him, even to those damaged by him, that his simplicity and basic good-will met with opposition, or rather calculated malevolence, as if utopia and happiness ought to follow by historical law from everybody's doing what they wanted, simply. But even when things were going perfectly, he could allow himself another kind of childishness, as when, in the sub, pumps and nice clean shirt borrowed for him by Arthur Symonds, and looking like a respectable clergyman, he lectured in London and Oxford and Salted, meanwhile writing to his two mistresses in Paris asking them to meet him off the Champs at seven pm on Wednesday and Thursday, respectively—this at the age of forty-nine.

The friend-producing projection of himself as younger (junior, less eminent) than the person he is with is most strikingly seen in his relations with his wife, Mathilde, who was after all only seventeen (compared with his twenty-six) on the day of their wedding, that is, a mere eighteen months older than Rimbaud to whom she lost him after less than two years. Somewhat, though, Verlaine forces us to imagine her as wielding the conjugal and social power of bulwark maturity. In the poem "Birds in the Night" written shortly after their last day together, Verlaine insists in so many words on her youth, her air (in her white and yellow summer dress) of being a little spouse, even a daughter, but the tone he adopts is that of a child blaming a grown-up who will not let him have both the contradictory things he wants.

Verlaine in fact had been spoiled as a child, so much indeed that his relatives had been scandalized at the dance he led his dotting parents. It doesn't seem too presumptuous to connect that early experience of autocracy with his later sensitivity about the will of others and his difficulties with self-control. These difficulties were such that his wife, his baby son and his one-loved and ever-forgiving mother were lucky to escape unharmed from the ungentled rage that overcame him if he was thwarted when even slightly poisoned (as one must say of him) with alcohol. He, too, was lucky—that he went to jail in 1873 only for a "Tentative d'assassinat" (he characteristically noted the "mis-spelling") and not for the murder or manslaughter of his ten-year-younger friend, Rimbaud.

Thinking of this personality, so tender and so rough, one rejects the facile judgment of "weakness" surprisingly passed on Verlaine by his "more worldly" fellow-biographer, Harold Nicolson. How does one weigh the character of a man who continued to the end of his life making friends and struggling to write (and writing) good verse, compared (say) with that of the wonderful and terrible boy who, inheriting Verlaine's "foolish virgin" gave up first, verse, then prose at nineteen, and became a gun-runner? While conceding that Ver-

laine's is a test-case for theorists of "weakness"—whatever that is—one prefers the human as well as literary understanding of Mallarmé, who at his old friend's graveside refused to admire the poet and condemn the man: "notre contemporain affronta, dans toute l'épouvante, l'état du chanteur du rêveur." Grandiose, and dangerously encouraging, perhaps. One may fall back less controversially on the words reported by St Matthew, and paraphrased by Verlaine for a similar context: showing, but at been aroused by a few quotations from memory, but the two young men felt they couldn't lead him the book, which didn't belong to them. "From the beginning to the end, Verlaine did not stop laughing, and in the most moving and poignant passages his laugh actually interrupted us: it was laughter mixed with tears. And this laughter, a natural expression of enthusiasm from his impulsive and divinely child-like spirit, was so beautiful that we admired it for itself, like a poem." Verlaine would then have been about thirty-nine, but he still had the laugh, "presque aussi neuf qu'un rire d'enfant", ten years later, when the shy young Valéry saw him burst from his grotesque *antre* or to the Paris street, raging like Polyphemus and babbling his cudgel on the pavement, a brutal majesty.

It would be a vulgar error to think of Verlaine's poems as occasional, but they often contain strong allusions to autobiographical buried treasure, and as he published many of them years out of sequence, one well understands the obsession of Verlaineans of all sorts with the parts of his life that may have been transposed into poems, and their desire to rearrange these complete units as if they were jigsaw-puzzle pieces whose order of composition somehow constituted an *explication*. Again, Verlaine's work is a critical test-case in that the most determined anti-biographicalist would agree with V. P. Underwood's apparently superficial remark: "Chez Verlaine, l'oeuvre traduit la vie avec une fidélité rare."

Anyone who does admire Verlaine's work will be fascinated by this new book about him: it is so usefully down-to-earth and factual. A good biography, one might have supposed, must be a sort of *roman à clef* with key enclosed, that is, an attempt to make sense, an "organic structure" out of somebody else's life; but Pierre Petitfils is extraordinarily innocent of such intellectual ambitions. He appears (with some lapses) to have read "everything", he either through modesty or through desire to keep the work down to reasonable proportions, he discusses nothing—he just relates: the book reads almost like a fuller version, in proper sentences, of those *Chronologies* which so many Verlaine scholars have compiled and included in their editions and selections. When Petitfils puts something in, he barely hints why, but, for instance, how fruitfully it modifies one's reading of *Fêtes Galantes* and the poem in *Sagesse* ("Sage" to its author) about the prison at Mons as "the best of castles" ("Fort on 1873") to be informed that Verlaine's great-uncle had once owned the "beau château de Carlsbourg" in the Belgian Ardennes, and that as a boy he used to walk in its grounds with his aunt Louise Grandjean, and that (all these facts are scattered) he treasures in a painting of the château done by his father.

In accordance with this discretion, Petitfils does not himself describe Verlaine's physique, except to mention the half-closed eyes, "yeux bridés"—"shifty Mongolian eyes" as Nicolson put it) he inherited from his mother. (One never learns the colour of these eyes—which are supposed, but by other authors, to have made Verlaine fatally unattractive.) Other people's descriptions are quoted, as they come up, so on p. 122 there is Delahaye's first impression (November 1871) of Verlaine as "tall and slim, with a shy, supple manner... beautiful eyes" and on p. 316 the novelist Richilde's, as "a sad workman" (fifteen years later). Petitfils seems to trust that such carefully dusted fragments add up if left in their chronological order. There is only one place where he rearranges his material, so as to make three long-drawn-out stories coherent: the misunderstanding about visiting a childhood friend, a curé near Charleville in

owner—she liked to be called "Esther") and Eugénie Krantz. Petitfils compares this double love (that seems to be the right word) to the choice Verlaine couldn't make twenty years before, between Rimbaud ("la folie libérée, les foucades, l'aventure") and Mathilde ("le devoir, l'ordre, les conventions sécurisantes"). Interestingly, Eugénie, who represents order—and is older than him—and has a face like a frog, is the one he finally chooses, or has to choose, to live with and die in the tidy garret of; though Philomène is the one who visits him in hospital, when she can get away from her pimp, a M. Lacan, known as "l'Américain".

The book's stream of nearly pure information I found exhilarating. I could have done with more, and don't understand the Petitfils rationing-system: he mentions Lepelletier's novels *en passant*, and Delahaye's marriage and children not at all, though these strands in his friends' lives must have meant much to Verlaine. The delightful story about Mme Verlaine senior entertaining her son's friends in 1883 with her military expressions remembered from the 1830s ("Monsieur, mettez ici la 17e lettre de l'alphabet") is relegated to a note at the back of the book. On the other hand, space is allowed in the text for some good Rimbaud stories: one is grateful for the half-page about the source of the famous sonnet "Les Voyelles" (Cabaner was trying to teach Arthur the piano, and thought it would be helpful to associate *de* *re* *mi* *fa* *sol* with colours, even writing an explanatory sonnet, the whole thing being completely arbitrary); and the two paragraph-long snippets of *symphonie and discordance* click wonderfully in these impatient Anglo-Saxon ears, almost better than Verlaine's single words: *cymbalistes! décadards!*

One does not at all want to complain at the severe limits Petitfils has worked within a crude, almost Victorian notion of what sort of facts a "life" is made of, with no social-historical wallpaper in the background, and no close-up lens. But then, what was needed, I think, was a firm topiarist's hand applied to the wild jungle of available information. This labour of love Petitfils has performed. His book does not answer our first question about Verlaine (for that, one can recommend the poet's letters, especially in collections edited and annotated by Georges Zayed, or in his autobiographical prose); but it is extremely readable.

However, one does want to complain very loudly indeed about the inadequacy of Petitfils's references. Often he cites no source at all for his information, as in the case already referred to, of Rimbaud's sonnet, or the reconstruction (not revealed as such) of what happened when Verlaine went to get the doctor for Mathilde (July 7, 1872) and never returned.

The rationale seems to be that "obvious" sources are not given: thus the brief account of Verlaine's lecture-tour in Holland makes no reference to his having written it up glowingly afterwards.

And (apart from citing Delahaye's theory about Verlaine's inability to endure emotional set-backs) Petitfils only once in the book puts forward anything approaching a psychological formula; it is when he is outlining Verlaine's relations in his last six years with his two mistresses Philomène Boudin (a name too dramatic for its

When we arrived in the promised land we were taken to a flat, swept place fenced for our protection and there surrounded by the speeches of clever men and women, great brilliant hedges of words plerred by the yapping of small, very rich dogs, wrapped in tartan and damped under the arm in the manner of bagpipers, throughout it all we swallowed gratefully and showed our gums. Our new games were still awkward in our mouths like the recent fillings we tested with our tongues. All of us were unsteady on our feet as if still fresh from the dentist's chair with about us the faint hint of gas and we fought what was left of our faces back into feeling. We remembered those left behind, sleeping. No doubt exhausted, after the long ceremony of renouncing the cliffs but dreaming perhaps of us set free at last, stepping onto the golden streets, the famous wet flagstones waiting our footprints, while those who watched over the sleepers smiled too while they saw the lights overhead that burn all night touch in their teeth the expected gold.

Christopher Hope



Verlaine in 1869, a sketch by Cazals.

1888; the loss of control over Rimbaud's manuscripts (which Verlaine had hoped to edit and publish properly); and a dispute with his publisher Vanier.

And (apart from citing Delahaye's theory about Verlaine's inability to endure emotional set-backs) Petitfils only once in the book puts forward anything approaching a psychological formula; it is when he is outlining Verlaine's relations in his last six years with his two mistresses Philomène Boudin (a name too dramatic for its

Dentistry and Freedom

When we arrived in the promised land we were taken to a flat, swept place fenced for our protection and there surrounded by the speeches of clever men and women, great brilliant hedges of words plerred by the yapping of small, very rich dogs, wrapped in tartan and damped under the arm in the manner of bagpipers, throughout it all we swallowed gratefully and showed our gums. Our new games were still awkward in our mouths like the recent fillings we tested with our tongues. All of us were unsteady on our feet as if still fresh from the dentist's chair with about us the faint hint of gas and we fought what was left of our faces back into feeling. We remembered those left behind, sleeping. No doubt exhausted, after the long ceremony of renouncing the cliffs but dreaming perhaps of us set free at last, stepping onto the golden streets, the famous wet flagstones waiting our footprints, while those who watched over the sleepers smiled too while they saw the lights overhead that burn all night touch in their teeth the expected gold.

Christopher Hope

Thirty-six pages later we reach the publication of *Quince Jours en Hollande* and are told that Jean Aubry—who? no explanation, just an entry in the bibliography—thinks that piece the best prose thing Verlaine ever wrote; and so we may realise Aubry too was a source. Incidentally, at one point on this trip Verlaine was asked by some ladies to read "L'Après-midi d'un Faune" to them: Petitfils says he was confused and vexed by this request; but Verlaine says quite clearly that he knew that its subject, anaesthetically obscure on the page, would be embarrassingly clear when read out—so he read it in his "whitest" voice.

That is the only narrative mistake of Petitfils that I caught, and it did not shake my general sense of his judiciousness and dependability, but there are lots of misprints, some of them serious garblings of verse-quotations. How can this—"Tu nous fuis comme le soleil sur la mer"—ever come from the real first line of the beautiful "Dédicace" sonnet on Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's death?—"Tu nous fuis, comme fuit le soleil sous la mer..." And there are three mistakes (at least one detectable to the casual reader) in this quatrain:

Car dans l'orgueil d'être plus libre
Que les plus libres de ce monde,
Souds aux gros mots de tous calibres,
Inscissables au rire innombrable.
—from the bisexual-rhymed happy-wanderers poem "L'Est et l'Erabund".
Metre-spoiling misprints (more on pages 145, 150, 259-61) that have got past the compositor, a printer's reader or two, the publisher and the author! Has French education deteriorated so much?

Reviewers always complain about bnd indexes (because they make the job so much more laborious), but how primitive not to index Verlaine himself. Scholars too want easy access to Verlaine's addresses, his poems and other works mentioned, his jobs, the stages and places of his life (Petitfils names small unidentifiable places as nonchalantly as he does unexplained people), the novels he appeared in (as *Blancot*—*Vert-Loire*—or *Crestes*, etc.—full marks for reading the books!), the bars and clubs (there is almost nothing, incidentally, about the *Chat Noir* and the *ombres chinoises* mentioned in "Dans ce café bondé d'imbéciles", one of the *Histoires* poems), and the productions of Verlaine's plays. I should also like a map of Paris marked to show, among other things, the journey Mathilde made alone through the fighting at the end of the Commune, when pregnant with the future Métro stationmaster of "Malesherbes" or "Villiers".

M Petitfils is clearly not one of your moderns who unfold their relationship to the biographical victim or tell you every time they leave the typewriter, and what for. But part of the reader's experience of this book is, all the same, Butch Cassidy's question "Who is this guy?" From the page opposite the title-page we learn that Petitfils has written on Rimbaud—has helped edit the *Pièces d'Album Rimbaud* and will edit their *Album Verlaine* (see books forward to seeing at last Eugénie Krantz's *Vie Posthume* portrait and the *Château de Carlsbourg* painting), but there is no indication of where he works or what he is: no preface or blur-note, no thanks, no acknowledgments. The date of his first Rimbaud work (1949) places him as a contemporary of the heroic generation of Verlaineans (Borneque and Zayed), and may explain why he lacks the opinionatedness that disfigures the work of presumably younger men like A. E. Carter (whose book incidentally is not in Petitfils's bibliography). But is he an academic? or is the Rimbaud work a private obsession? What are we to make of his unbalanced preference for manuscript readings (in the poem "Ecrit sur l'Album de Mme. N. de V.") and in the history unfair pseudo-epitaph on Mathilde) of work that Verlaine had himself seen through the press (*Ulys et Nageur* and *Gosse*)? I fear he may be an *amateur* like your reviewer, and will be accordingly demolished by the Académie Française, to say nothing of the Académie des Goncourt.

I hope he will relent and satisfy my curiosity, perhaps in such brief terms as his great subject is said (incredibly, alas) to have used when introducing himself to York Powell on Oxford station: "Paul Verlaine—alcoolique, syphilitique, pédéraste, poète."

Coal Miners

From my vantage in the company's office I never cease to admire our coal miners' Philosophic composure before the problem Of faith. In fact I was one of the first On our floor to fight for the right to wear denim. I know it fools no one, except no claim. And makes me look ridiculous in the eyes Of Upper Management, but how else, if I can't speak To them directly, can I express my genuine willingness To let their Man be leader of the pack? These small homages to the icons of his tragic vigour Only allow us less guiltily to hypothesize his life Underground how he attacks the spangled earth. Advancing slowly down its major arteries impelled By an anger his own unholy din every moment renews. His skin, like the limestone of a sea-worn cliff, Has become one magnificent callus. His lungs Are more dense with death than any cowhay's. Whatever his cigarette. Because he has inhabited Even this depth of darkness with the light Of a common purpose his soul is socialized To a degree we can but dimly imagine. Let us at least Do that. Let us honor the dowdy churches And ephemeral pornography that allow him to breed Responsive sons who'll carry on the vicious fight With the first terrific lunges of a man's whole strength. Let us wear, if only in our bedrooms or on certain Holidays, a lantern on our heads in honour Of his conquest of despair. Dare we suppose that ours is larger? But as for approaching him In friendship, as for asking him to recognize That by signing his paychecks in sanctioned simulation Of the boss's signature we can be useful too— No, that won't do. If they could hear us mauling In the fletive caverns of our mirrored bars, They'd only damn our condescending eyes. Our kindnesses to them must be invisible or so discreet As to seem so building the movies that let them dream Of houseboats, spies in helicopters, just desserts. Of Samson as he detonates the jet-black pillars Of one subterranean temple after another. Then carts away their shattered Banks To be burned in a million benevolent mills. This much we'll do, and more: for ravaged skin We'll sell a soap and call it ever-springing Hope. On Saturdays, between advertisements for beer, We'll share their ritual brutalities and cheer them on. But we must not ask to be imagined in return. Our business suits and busy minds, disabling fears And air-conditioned air, cannot engender Reciprocal myths. Perhaps it is Virgilian of me, But I'd prefer my brothers underground To believe in their imalleable rightness. I'd rather they didn't know too much Of the contents of my desk, the source Of my pride, the force of my imagination As it gnaws at the dark walls that surround me.

Tom Disch

Insular images

By Margaret Gardiner

GEORGE MACKAY BROWN
Portrait of Orkney
128pp. Hogarth Press. £8.50.
0 7012 0513 X

George Mackay Brown describes the "Orkney mind" as "an intermeshing of the practical and the imaginative" and this could well be a description of his own writing in his *Portrait of Orkney*. Every now and then he abandons the measured language of his prose-poem to break into a little dance, a snatch of poetry, a piece of legend and myth, bubbling up to the surface of the present.

The book is divided into sections with orderly headings—People, Land, Sea, Religion, Culture and so on. But since this is neither a guide book with illustrations nor a picture book with commentary, a pleasant unarchy confuses these categories. Contemporary descriptions and facts are intertwined with history, history with legend and legend with speculation.

and speculation. This weave—images of weaving, spinning, web and tapestry constantly recur—is a sure sign of a poet's world, one where the poet is not a modern world, are nevertheless unusually aware of their past. The evidences are all about them and are part of their everyday lives—standing stones, brochs, cairns and the claid-like clusters of farm buildings. And weaving is a natural image for an Orkneyman; indeed, until quite recently hand weaving would often occupy farmers during the dark winters and today, in summer, fishermen can be seen sitting outside their houses, skillfully knotting their nets.

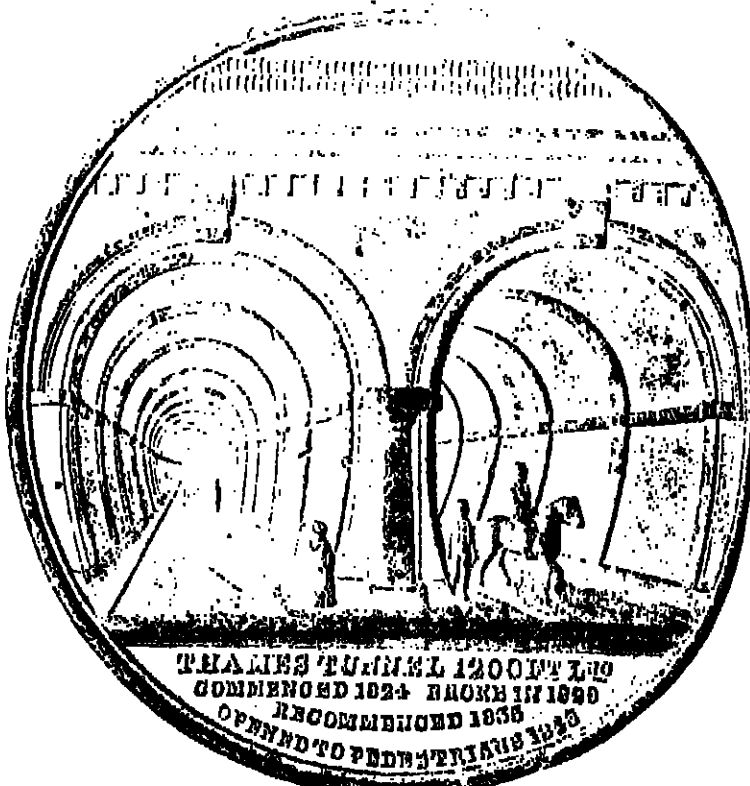
Although George Mackay Brown writes admiringly of Orkney farmers with their "intricate of understatement" he himself—at least on paper—buzzes with enthusiasm. He delights in lists: they clarify, they order down upon the pages—lists of place names, of family names, of sea stories, of the subject about which Orkneyans have written, of Orkney artists, of the people attending the Orkney Show.

It is in the section called "Lore" that George Mackay Brown's writing excels: he communicates his love of these folk tales with ease. In the charming final section, "A Nature Anthology," he also

shows his relish of earlier writings about Orkney—extracts from the sixteenth, seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, ranging from reports of monsters and wonders to careful descriptions of the flora and fauna of the islands.

There are many photographs by Werner Forman. The black and white plates are the more successful and give a truer feeling of the islands, but some of the colour ones are beautiful; particularly the interior view of St Magnus Cathedral, the Dverger Stone, Hov, and the "Last of the peat fires, Kibbister." A kind of mysterious dusk pervades these plates—not at all realistic but lovely. Elsewhere the colour is sometimes too sweet and sometimes too harsh.

The layout is often unfortunate. The full page plates are best left to the edge of the page, which is fine for what George Mackay Brown calls "the long thin landscape of the islands." But when there are two full-page plates on opposite pages, the lack of frame or margin confuses the eye. The layout of both images, the one of a Brodgar's temple, which is spread over two pages, is particularly unfortunate. The line of stitching down the spine of the book,



This commemorative medallion of the Thames Tunnel, the first tunnel to be built beneath the soft bed of a river, shows the twin entrances at the Rotherhithe end and gives important dates in the history of its construction (including its collapse in 1828) which was finally completed in 1843. The illustration is taken from Iron Bridge to Crystal Palace: Impact and Images of the Industrial Revolution by Asa Briggs (200pp. Thames and Hudson in collaboration with the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, £1.95, 0 300 27155 0). In this well-illustrated book Lord Briggs traces the growth and spread of industrial technology in Britain and other parts of the world.

Down to the Humber

By D. M. Palliser

EDWARD GILLET and KENNETH A. MACMAHON
A History of Hull
428pp. Oxford University Press. £12.
0 19 713436 X

A. G. Dickens, in a perceptive and too little-known account of Hull and the East Riding of Yorkshire, was at pains to defend the interest and attractions of England's "third port." "Allow me a gesture of contempt," he wrote, "towards those ex-quixotic literary topographers who, after rhapsodising over York and Beverley, either turn aside from Hull with open disgust or record it but as an agonised and grinning page." He was right, for Hull has a long and interesting past, though commercial growth, Hitler's bombs, and post-war redevelopment have conspired to destroy much of the physical evidence for it. And the neglect of which Dickens complained has since been atoned for by two major collaborative histories: an entire volume of the Victoria County History under the able editorship of K. J. Allison in 1969, and now the volume under review.

"Hull" is a convenient shorthand expression for more than one urban settlement in the angle where the small River Hull flows into the Humber. Its advantages for waterborne trade apparently made it a useful meeting-point for cargoes even before any town existed, as is suggested by a reference of 1193 to Yorkshire wool being collected for export in the "port of Hull". For the first town was apparently a planned settlement called Wyke upon Hull, sponsored by a local monastery about 1200 with an eye to commercial development. That tiny town was taken over, and enlarged and renamed Kingston upon Hull by Edward I, with a view to defence as well as commerce. Old Hull, therefore, with its regular street-plan and town walls, was as good an example of medieval town planning as Salisbury or Stratford, though it is not so easy to recognize today.

This late arrival among the greater English medieval towns never looked back, its ancient church of Holy Trinity—the largest medieval parish church in England—still testifies to its wealth. If not necessarily to its prosperity, its Trinity church, a maritime guild played an important part in the control of navigation and shipping, and its members were among the first Englishmen to participate in the fishing grounds of Iceland and the whaling off Greenland. It was chosen by Henry VIII as the location for a major complex of royal fortresses,

which would have rivalled the surviving defences at Berwick had they not been demolished by Victorian "improvements." Later it rose to the first rank of English ports through the importance of its fishing, shipping and shipbuilding, and it has retained that position despite recent economic difficulties.

A History of Hull has been written mainly by Edward Gillett, author of an earlier history of Grimsby, though drawing on some research and completed chapters by K. A. MacMahon, an East Yorkshire historian of distinction who died tragically young in 1972. The aim is "to give a compact account of the history of the town both for the specialist in urban history and for the general reader", based directly on original research rather than on the earlier, massive Victoria County History. That account takes the story from possible origins in the eleventh century to the Hull riots of 1976 and the opening of the Humber Bridge. It is a story of the last three centuries; and both urban historians and local readers will find here much fascinating information on trade, politics and social history.

Unfortunately, like many books trying to bridge two readerships, it is not quite able to satisfy either. The urban specialist unfamiliar with Hull will find the maps inadequate for the first half of the story; there is no plan of the medieval town, and Hollar's important early plan is quoted four times in evidence but not reproduced. There is rich documentation on Hull itself, but it is too rarely fitted into a broader framework. The reader is left unaware that Wyke and Kingston were important examples of the large class of medieval new towns studied by M. W. Barrow, whose standard work is not cited. The date of the town walls is never given, and it is mentioned only casually that they were built in the early years of the fifteenth century, the earliest centres of brick building in post-Roman England, but the reader would scarcely guess it from this account.

Altogether the book is much stronger on economic and political history than on physical growth and topography. A chapter on an excavated section of medieval wall, front raises hopes that are not fulfilled for the "important programme of urban archaeology over the past decade is mentioned in the text. Leland's careful description is misunderstood, and there is no mapping of the rapid urban growth since 1700. Evidence is presented in a very scattered and unsystematic way. The notes in Chapter 13 are unusable because they are out of phase with the text. Yet there is rich and rewarding information for the persevering reader, much of it previously unpublished, and at today's price it is a bargain.

Darkest Yorkshire

By Asa Briggs

DEREK FRASER (Editor)
A History of Modern Leeds
470pp. Manchester University Press. £17.50.
0 7190 0747 X

A young visitor to Leeds, Barclay Fox, described the city in 1837 as "amongst all good measure to profess pity for its 'poor denizens'." Derek Fraser, who edits this latest addition to the growing number of histories of English cities, starts his preface with this quotation. He ends it with a note of his own academic location, the University of Bradford. Before Leedsians (or Leeds Lovers) attribute Dr Fraser's choice of starting point to the old rivalry between Bradford and Leeds, it should be noted that not only was he a student in Leeds but that he still lives there. His volume has been supported, moreover, by Leeds City Council, which will doubtless warm more to Fraser's second remark that Leeds is now "a clean, attractive and relatively prosperous modern city".

If the second remark requires some qualification, hinted at, at least, in the last three chapters of the book on the twentieth-century Leeds, it is difficult, too, to understand why, even at the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign, Leeds should have been described as "the vilest of the vile". There were many competitors. Some visitors to Yorkshire's great houses, of course, saw Leeds as a place in complete contrast, "oppressively industrial", as Dr Wilson, the author of the interesting chapter on Georgian Leeds put it. Yet there were closer links in certain respects—and they were to continue—between the Yorkshire squariness and aristocracy and Leeds than there were with Bradford or some other places. In fact, the sharpest criticism of Leeds tended to be made by writers. One of the first of them, Hartley Coleridge, stressed the assault on nature—the smoke-laden sky and the "foul stream hot with sleepless trade", the River Aire: Leeds taken as a whole was

the town where toiling, buying, selling, getting and spending, poisoning hope and fear Make but one season of the live-long year.

The black reputation was further darkened later in the century. George Eliot, not quoted by Fraser or his team of fellow-historians, said that the industrial suburbs of Leeds made her despair not only of present civilization but of any prospect, and Dickens once called it a "beastly place, 'one of the nastiest' he knew."

Yet it was not entirely through perversity that I chose to call my own chapter on Leeds in *Victorian Cities* "Leeds, A Study in Civic Pride". Like anyone who has got to know Leeds well through living there, I have not only appreciated but shared its strong sense of identity. Indeed local pride has always been compatible with, even at times buttressed by, external criticism, just as in the late twentieth-century pride in Don Revie's Leeds United was perhaps strongest when his team was being criticized. There have always been visible symbols of pride too—the eighteenth-century Cloth Hall; the nineteenth-century Town Hall; and (with necessary qualifications) the twentieth-century Civic Hall, Hendrow, and Quarry Hill Flats.

It is left largely to Fraser as editor of the volume to deal with "images" of Leeds, and well though he tries to present them they deserve rather more extended treatment. Certainly, some of the self-images were as disturbing as the images of outsiders. It was, after all, a Leeds newspaper, Samuel Smiles's *Leeds Times*, which issued in 1843 that Leeds lacked "the enthusiasm of Manchester, the enterprise of Glasgow, the volatile gaiety of Liverpool, the intense feeling of Birmingham and the power of London", and in more recent years, as Fraser notes in a brief reference to Leeds United, the only one in the book, Leeds citizens were said to have responded less warmly to their football team's successes and in fewer numbers than followers of Manchester United or Liverpool to theirs.

Leeds already had one historic asset, however, in 1837: "Unlike many other cities which grew fast in the nineteenth century, it had a long pedigree. It did not need legendary extensions. Barclay Fox was not visiting a new place. In 1838 the author of a *Historical Guide to Leeds* pointed out that a footpath to Leeds Charles Street and High Street was the site of a Roman camp and asked portentously 'What would Leeds be with ten Town Halls and no Kirkstall Abbey?'. Only last year Maurice Beresford began his fascinating *Walks Round Red Brick* (Leeds University Press, 1980) with a reference to exposed fossils near the University Steps and went on to show very pertinently how important it is to understand the nineteenth-century urban development of Leeds. The institutions of local government, moreover, were not a product of Victorian incorporation, as they were in Birmingham, Manchester or Bradford. A borough charter had been granted in 1207, albeit the charter of a manorial borough, and a later charter of 1626 provided the framework for local administration as Leeds grew. The fact that the Corporation owned no property and collected no rates is of considerable importance, not least when Leeds is compared, say, with Liverpool. Yet the pedigree was there.

Rees—and that the *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, which had a remarkable line of editors including Fenner Brockway, is mentioned only briefly in a bibliographical note. There were certainly some clashes of ideology at the University, the twentieth-century history of which (and its relations with the city) is not properly told. This is a local history of Leeds with much of the relevant national politics and national social history left out.

The main cluster of chapters from the third to the fifteenth, is called "The Age of Great Cities", and certainly Leeds figured prominently in all nineteenth-century assessments of what the main characteristics of that new age really were. One of its prophetic figures, the Rev. R. W. Hamilton, a Congregationalist minister, is only very briefly mentioned, but he would bear quotation. The fascinating issues turn as always on the relationship between numbers and quality. C. J. Morgan's chapter on demographic change—the right place to begin—is useful and well documented: like some of the other writers, Morgan points to the main contrasts within Leeds. By 1871 Kirkstall, within range of the Abbey, is "a large and teeming village" and Headingley the classic middle-class suburb (about 60 per cent of its growth between 1851 and 1891 was due to immigration). Both historians and geographers have emphasized social segregation in Victorian cities, and Professor Beresford touches on segregation along with many other subjects (including the preservation of open space) in his complementary chapter on "The face of Leeds".

The chapter by E. J. Connell and M. Ward on industrial development between 1780 and 1914 picks out most of the main themes, although some topics, like Leeds pottery (of considerable interest outside Leeds) have to be dealt with in a paragraph. In its last pages, attention is rightly drawn to some of the problems that disquieted Rimmer twenty-five years ago. For all its earlier versatility and adaptability in 1914, Leeds was still a centre of wrought-iron rather than of steel, of machinery rather than of machine-tools, of steam rather than of electrical engineering. What happened after 1914? Why was Leeds, to use Fraser's phrase, already quoted, "relatively prosperous"? With which other cities is it being compared—Bradford or Sheffield or Birmingham or Manchester?

"Middle-class culture" is dealt with rather summarily and very selectively by R. J. Morris, though it gets off to a good start with music. Again, late developments, like the Grand Theatre, slip between the chapters. We learn from a terse reference in Chapter Seventeen that in the 1960s and 1970s the Grand Theatre was "saved" (we are not told how), and in Chapter Fifteen that it was built in 1877-8, but Morris leaves it out. Likewise, it is curious, too, that there is no mention in it or elsewhere of Gaiskell, Alice Bacon, Denis Healey or Merlyn

reference to Broderick's Corn Exchange. There is no reference, either then or later, to the Palace of Varieties, one of the best known Leeds institutions—or for that matter to Leeds as a centre of broadcasting, its rise and fall.

Perhaps such activities are not thought to belong to "middle-class culture". But why then is there not an accompanying chapter on "working-class culture" or "sub-cultures" and how they changed at different points in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? Richard Hoggart does not figure in the index, though he is mentioned briefly and for the right reason in a chapter on "The working class" by T. Woodhouse. This chapter is almost entirely political, and in any case makes too much of the "labour aristocracy", the Leeds limits of which are never clearly defined. Woodhouse tries to fit Leeds facts into other people's frameworks rather than to devise a framework of his own. Once again, also, there is a gap between what is said in this chapter and what is said about the Leeds Labour Party at a later date. The problems of having two authors dealing with the same developing subject are never completely overcome. Thus, Professor Taylor's brief account of the economic and social development of the Jewish community in late-nineteenth century Leeds is not followed up with any reference to the influence of Leeds Jews on twentieth-century culture or to the economic and social impact of post-1950 waves of very different migration.

The account of Church and chapel history, too, is brought to a close rather oddly at the end of Victoria's reign. What happened to religion in the new conditions of the mid and late twentieth century? Nigel Yates asks very few questions in his chapter on religion, yet they leap to the surface in a city where Methodism was strong and where there was one outstanding vicar, Dr Hook. It is arguable that even in the nineteenth century,

rather summarily and very selectively by R. J. Morris, though it gets off to a good start with music. Again, late developments, like the Grand Theatre, slip between the chapters. We learn from a terse reference in Chapter Seventeen that in the 1960s and 1970s the Grand Theatre was "saved" (we are not told how), and in Chapter Fifteen that it was built in 1877-8, but Morris leaves it out. Likewise, it is curious, too, that there is no mention in it or elsewhere of Gaiskell, Alice Bacon, Denis Healey or Merlyn

The School Atlas

The geography teacher's smug monotone is spliced with gunshots — a Messerschmitt 109 Nose-dives into the North Sea, its pilot Still dangling beneath his parachute.

Other days were calmer, I'd doodle Sea-monsters, a Mexican bandit with bandollers, Or stare through the window at passing clouds Like continents unravelling . . .

I doubt the teacher himself, replaying The same set syllabus year by year, ever hoped: For more, Boring us with statistics, He made us look between the lines

Into woodland or open fields where lovers Hide, a tramp falls asleep in the warmth Of a ditch, the surviving generations Lay out their baskets for a Sunday picnic.

Also those anonymous places we dreamed Our future in, named now and trapped in the web With our precise addresses, as real And inescapable as my random Osmotrol inkblots.

Charles Boyle

April Books

Non-Fiction

NATURE LOVER'S LIBRARY Reader's Digest

Three beautifully illustrated field guides — BIRDS OF BRITAIN (£8.95), TREES AND SHRUBS OF BRITAIN (£8.50) and WILD FLOWERS OF BRITAIN (£7.50) — packed with recognition profiles, look-alike charts and special features in full colour. An invaluable collection for the student, dedicated naturalist, rambler or interested layman.

AMERICAN DREAMS: LOST AND FOUND Studs Terkel

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A SUMMER IN THE TWENTIES Peter Dickinson

Set in 1926 during the General Strike, this is a rich novel, humorous, exciting and deeply evocative of place and time. £8.95

Hodder & Stoughton

John Co. Ltd

Mister Television

By E. S. Turner

LESLIE MITCHELL:
Leslie Mitchell Reporting
An Autobiography
228pp. Hutchinson. £7.95.
0 09 143920 5

Those who live by television like to get their autobiographies out before middle age sets in. They will fail to understand why Leslie Mitchell, the first "television personality" of them all, has waited until his seventy-sixth year before telling the story of his restless, accident-prone life.

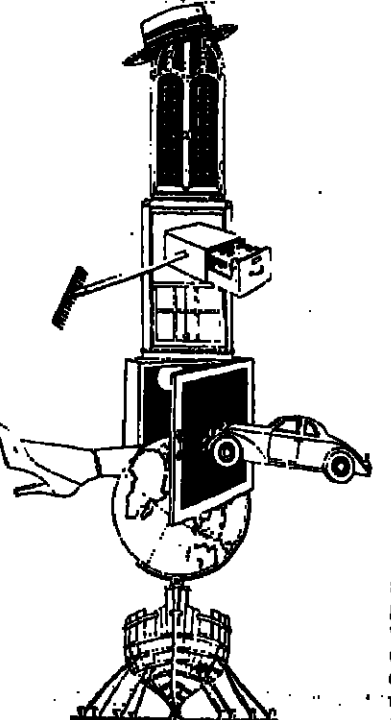
His career spans the history of British television. As an actor he accompanied Marie Tempest to Selfridge's to demonstrate the possibilities of James Logie Baird's invention. Soon afterwards, in 1936, a callous *Daily Mail* headline - TELEVISION ADONIS FOUND - announced his recruitment to the embryonic BBC television service. Also signed on were a brace of Venuses, Jasmine Bligh and Elizabeth Cowell. This sketchy service collapsed unnoted in September 1939. When it was revived in 1946 Mr Mitchell was there with the words "As I was saying when we were so rudely interrupted" (wasn't that also how "Cassandra" resumed his column, after Army service?). In 1954, when Independent Television went on the air, it was Mitchell who announced "This is London" ("rather as if he was operating a Freedom Radio from an occupied city," said a critic).

The author's father, an Edinburgh caterer, disappeared early from his life, but turned up many years later in South Africa. Although the boy clashed with two stepfathers, he did not have a deprived upbringing. One good friend was W. J. Locke, the wealthy author of *The Beloved Vagabond*; another was Nigel Playfair, who helped him on to the stage. At twenty-three he was dragged 100 yards by a car and shockingly injured. Back in the theatre, he had to refuse the part of Stanhope in *Journal of a Soldier*, which went to Laurence Olivier, but he later played the role in London and abroad.

As a 55-week radio announcer he exchanged his usual asperities with the BBC bureaucracy. His job, he found, did not endle him to a can of water. The official dislike for discussing pay "stemmed, I think, from a long-outdated belief that all educated people had some private income and somewhere to live." (This belief survived in some publishing houses,

not to mention Printing House Square). Resigning, he became the buoyant, upbeat voice of British Movietone News, continuing in this chore even after he was called to the BBC to open the television service in 1936. On that historic day nerves were fraying. When a higher-up gave him a sheaf of closely-typed announcements he tore it in half and said he would rely on memory and improvisation. Thus he set the pattern for a new breed of young men who live dangerously before the cameras, thinking on their feet.

The account of early days at Alexandra Palace makes amusing reading. At first outdoor programmes had to be confined to the Palace grounds, but the amenities luckily included a lake, a railway station, a bowling arena, a skating rink, a dance-floor and acres of grass and tarring. So, with ingenuity, it was possible to give sports lessons and gardening demonstrations, to show off prize locomotives and



This straw hat perched on a gothic arch above globe, carillon, flag, flying cabinet etc represents in a collage by "F.R." not the summation of achievements of a particular English public school but the comic genius of Buster Keaton. Like the pictures on page 404 this illustration is taken from *Surrealism and Its Popular Accomplishments*, edited by Franklin Rosemont (City Lights Books. \$4.95).

For a brief spell Mitchell was publicity chief for Sir Alexander Korda and learnt in turn what it was like to have his work torn up unrelentingly in front of him. But it was the role of "Television" that appealed and he milked it for all it was worth, even as a life-opener. His jaw, once triply broken, needed to be reset and he had to live with a steel brace and a self-disinfecting arm. Besides guts, he had audacity. When working for Associated Rediffusion he asked Lord Reith to appear in his "Victor of the Day" programme. Back came a letter in Shavian vein asking "Do you really think I would come in—like anyone off the street?" and ending "Perhaps at 5,000 guineas I might." It was a pretty reply from one who had earlier likened Independent Television to a maggot sunk in the body politic.

Mr Mitchell forbears to comment on the way television has developed in late years; as one who was thought "too late-did-dah" for the north he may well have views on the rage for regional accents. But his book ends abruptly in 1966, with his second happy marriage.

Some of these simplifications are mere statements of the obvious: "the impact of *El Jeco* essentially depends on the fact that television is an intimate medium." Others are less superficial. A plain narrative outline of the importance of Reinhardt is given authority by Eslin's personal observation of it, and a certain pliancy, perhaps, by the information that he was employed to cue a distantly-stationed actor during a production of *Everyman* at the Salzburg Festival. The account of the relationship between Beckett and BBC radio is undoubtedly authenticated by Eslin's major role in those transactions.

But it is when he writes of his most professional point of view, as an insider in television production, that one is most aware of the limitations of the expert as theorist. In discussing television, Eslin is both the median man who understands the mysteries of the trade, and the pundit who claims to bring weighty intellectual scrutiny to bear upon it. The "media" essays overlap each other very considerably, a common difficulty in collections of material produced at different times, but one which in this case underlines the simplification of the issues involved, and the failure either to find by any satisfactory critical or theoretical method any way to approach them, or to link them to the other areas of his concern. Eslin is aware that television is having a fundamental effect upon us, and upon all areas of our culture cannot but be affected; but he offers no real, could-

The West goes South

By Robert Hewison

CHRISTOPHER FRAYLING:
Spaghetti Westerns
Cowboys and Europeans from Karl May to Sergio Leone.
304pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
£15.95. (paperback, £8.95).
0 7100 0503 2

The Professor of Cultural History at the Royal College of Art has taken his chair in both hands: he must convince the many that the European western is an appropriate subject for serious study; he must defend himself against small but determined groups of film historians who will dispute every deviation from their respective critical approaches. For the many, the photographs of Clint Eastwood, Lee Van Cleef and Eli Wallach (The Good, the Bad and the Ugly) will not long sustain the illusion that this is a popular book on a popular subject. This is a serious book that makes no concessions. Frayling does not even feel the need to say why he has chosen to study European westerns, beyond a reference to there being a gap in the critical canon.

Westerns, however, are a popular form of entertainment and exist for a mass market, and Frayling is faced with the perennial problem of the cultural historian when writing about "formula" art. He can assume the reader's familiarity with only one or two representative of the genre, and his choice of examples will involve an element of critical evaluation which the formula discusses in terms of its "best" rather than "worst" products. Though the latter might tell us more about the formula - in this case its cruelty and violence. As a result, the study of a popular genre becomes confused with the critical discriminations associated with high art, even with the idea that this is high art.

Beyond this methodological problem there is the difficulty that of the Italian/Spanish ("spaghetti") westerns upon which Frayling concentrates, fewer than twenty per cent have been seen outside Italy, and Frayling has the honesty to admit that of the three hundred spaghetti westerns produced in the key period 1963-69 he has himself seen only fifty-five. Accordingly, he discusses in detail but a few films (and one of his "classics", *Django*, is banned from this country), and

few directors. Among these his emphasis is heavily on the perfection of the formula - later its internal critic - Sergio Leone.

Frayling may make no concession to the popular reader, but he seems over-placatory to the circling band of rival film critics. Granted, it is important to define one's critical position and to acknowledge that of others, but Frayling spends a much time on rival theories that he is not confronted by an actual argument western until page 50. Moving between the structuralists, the Marxists, the sociologists and the literary critics, Frayling takes a cautious line of his own. He behaves like Clint Eastwood in *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964, Leone's first stab at the formula); he leans first to one side, then another, accepting ideas from each group in turn, but ultimately deserting them all. The difficulty is that (like Clint Eastwood arriving from nowhere and leaving for nowhere) he leaves us uncertain as to his fundamental critical commitment.

Of his enthusiasm for the work of Sergio Leone, however, there is no doubt. He sees him as the exponent of a "strange form of critical cinema" which is a commentary both on the "authentic" Hollywood western and on its own Italian society. "Authentic" - as the word Hollywood implies - does not mean historically true, only true to the western formula, and Frayling causes some confusion by insisting on the local accuracy of Leone's *mise en scène*, and the untruthfulness of his interpretation of history. Whether westerns are or are not like the historical West is a mythical place in itself is an irrelevant question when we are dealing with expensive formula entertainment. What is important is the appeal of that entertainment to consumers, and the means by which a creator like Leone can accommodate the formula and use it to his own end.

Frayling appears to conclude that for all Leone's use of research and subtle detail, the reception of his films in western Italy is what counted. And not only in terms of box office. This is Leone's "Critical cinema".

The emphasis, in the "Dollars" trilogy, on amoral families; families, class and *canon*; Latin concepts of honour and *chivalry* (more conspicuous than moral law); *compensations* (the role of the church in village society); plots involving crosses and double-crosses (often taken from Sicilian puppet plays); and perhaps most important of all, the profanation of Catholic icons - the emphasis on all this firmly locates Leone's renaissance of the "codes" of the Western within the context of Southern Italian society, and shows exactly the reason on which he has chosen to address the "cultural force" of "Catholicism" (and its penumbra).

Spaghetti Westerns, as this excerpt may suggest, is a mixture of the strong, the weak and the poorly constructed. Frayling has made a thorough study of the genre; and he is good on the actual circumstances of film production in Italy, though he does not tell us enough about the pressures of finance. His weakness is the uncertain ground that he has chosen, for he has approached it via other people's attitudes to film criticism, rather than making the subject his own. The book has a number of false starts, the word "perhaps" is over-employed, and it is a bad sign when the same minor piece of information appears not once, but several times. Unusually, Frayling has been able to obtain actual stills from some of the films; their correct screen ratio, and this greatly helps his analysis of sequences; but the photographs do not reproduce well, and they are very confusingly captioned.

The final questions must be whether or not Frayling's work will increase our appreciation of *Spaghetti Westerns* and convince us that they are a subject for serious study. The answer to both is undoubtedly yes, but the medium is ill-suited to the message.

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From innocence to instruction

By Paul Smith

The British Film Institute National Film Archive Catalogue
Volume 1: Non-Fiction Films
800pp. British Film Institute. £50 plus £2 postage and packing.
0 85170 101 9

"Two clowns in Pierrot costume toss a hat to each other." The description of the earliest film preserved in the National Film Archive exemplifies the character of film at the outset of its career in the mid-1890s, as essentially a showman's toy. The (and of its origin as merely the latest novelty in idle diversion was to cling so persistently to film that it comes almost as a surprise to see, from the NEA's fascinating new catalogue of its non-fiction holdings, how rapidly the medium developed in form and function.

If entertainment was always its primary purpose, other uses followed quickly. At first, of course, the stunning phenomenon of recorded motion was itself enough. Shoot anything that moved was the motto, with a natural leaning to the intrinsically dramatic fire-brigade turn-outs or trains hurtling towards the camera. The cinema's age of innocence was, however, soon over, as the journalists, the educators, the propagandists and the advertisers moved in. Newsreels outside the scope of this volume, but topical reporting and cartooning make an early appearance. The first British political propaganda film preserved is G. A. Smith's *John Bull's Hearth*, of 1903, a plea for fair trade countered in 1905 by Hepworth's "political pantomime" demonstrating the advantages of Free Trade.

The scientific and instructional possibilities of film were fast recognized. X-ray cinematography was demonstrated at the Royal Society in 1897. By 1903, the Urban Company was using cine-micrography on cheese miles and water fleas in its "Unseen World" series, and, by 1911, three-lapse photography, along with Gaumont in France. Indeed, Urban seems to have been in the van in the development of the medium. *Is Spiritualism a Fraud?* (c 1906), a "dramatised documentary" purporting to expose fraudulent mediums, has the ring of modern "investigative" journalism, while *Accidents Will Happen* (1907), a sketch on mishaps not covered by the new Employers' Liability Act, perhaps inaugurates the worthy and dull tradition of whole-some public information via the screen, most earnestly sustained in this collection by the heroic sanitary efforts of the Bermondsey Borough Council Health Propaganda Department between the wars (though the sobriety of the Bermondsey style was memorably relieved at least once by *The Only Way: On a Tale of Two Titles*, "propaganda advocating the use of grade A [unbarred] milk, consisting of numerous drawings interspersed with Sydney Carton's last words").

So the reels unwind. The First World War stimulated the use of film, as of every medium of communication, to carry the government's message, and brought with it the Ministry of Information and its official productions. Perhaps war service increased film's social acceptability: figures such as Rodd and George V, who appear in Stoll's *The Victory Leaders* (1919), "the first attempt at cinema interviewing", had rarely been so close to the camera in its early days. Interviewing was to become easier a decade later with the arrival of sound, and sound and vision were quickly combined to create what was rather oddly called the "documentary", mostly a tendentious form of easement for the middle-class social conscience, and afflicted with artistic leishmaniasis and galling dislocation. From *Drifters* (1929) onwards, but the work of Grierson, Elton, Cavalcanti, Jennings, of the GPO Film Unit, the Empire Marketing Board, Stirling, Reelists, and Elder, Paley, and the more frankly propagandistic work of the 1930s, from the Communist Party of Great Britain to the Unemployment Association (why did the Unemployment Association make use of sound film very early on and Labour and Liberals not?) to the urgency of *Free Thelmann* (Relief Committee for the Victims of German Hunger) and the Progressive Film Institute's "Spain Today" series.

The instructional, documentary and propaganda strands are intertwined during the Second World War in the work of the Ministry of Information, bombard-

ing the cinema-going public with nutritious advice ("Cookery Hints" series, number 1, "methods of preparing porridge, with particular reference to the construction and use of a hobnob"), low-key heroics (*Newspaper Train* - "how a consignment of newspapers is rescued by train, despite enemy air raids. Arthur Christian examines an enemy bullet stopped by a bundle of the *Daily Express*"), and efforts to persuade one of the most caste-ridden societies in the world that the war did at least make for chumminess (*Four 23* - "men and women who would otherwise have remained strangers are brought together by their wartime A.R.P. duties"). The 1940s are the climax of the movement to mobilize society for common purposes through the cinema. By the 1950s, television is taking over: the public message is privately rather than communally received, and with it the variety entertainment and the discussion of current affairs that the old cinema had left largely to the halls, the newspapers, and the radio.

It would be hard to think of a facet of twentieth-century life unrepresented in the 10,000 items of this catalogue, though some of course, by virtue of photographic appeal, incidence of contemporary or later interest, accident of survival or of acquisition, figure more strongly than others. There is a lot of advertising ("the sun overleaps one morning and Nature has to be woken up by a Philips lamp"), aircraft, ballet, jazz, party politics, railways, sport, surgery, war and work (notably mining - perhaps the black and white effects were specially attractive to the dirt and dignity school). There are endless views of topography, and personalities unnumbered. Not everything represents professional contrivance for public consumption: there are amateur films too, as the cine-camera became cheap and readily portable, a flickering glimpse of the banalities of private experience, even if the faces are not always quite unfamiliar, as in the 8,000 feet of Eva Braun's home movies. For the first time, the human past is mechanically recorded for us in motion.

That does not mean a new epoch in historiography, as some of the more naive of the cinema's pioneers supposed. The camera does not give us objective truth, unaffected by the partiality of the human observer. If it records only what it "sees", what it sees depends on choices made by its human manipulators, and what it records rarely arrives on the screen without extensive confection by an editor. None the less, historians are now very ready - as the launch of a new *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* witnesses - to acknowledge the value of film and television records, not as peripheral illustration to accounts of the past derived from traditional documents, but as sources in their own right, which may in some contexts be of first-class significance. For the history of mass communication in this century, film is a fundamental object of study. More generally, it can illuminate not merely the way things looked but the way people thought or were invited or induced to think they were. The hope to find in this cinema clanking out demonstration of what really happened will always be present, and not always vainly. Yet the footage of Londonderry's "Bloody Sunday" compiled for the Widgery Tribunal will interest us in future not simply, or even mainly, as evidence of the event, but as one of the pieces of evidence which determined that body's view of the event. Not just a picture of external appearances, film stands as evidence of the purposes and prejudices of its makers and the influences which operated on its audience, a clue to assumptions and obsessions sometimes below the conscious level. Intriguing as much for what it reveals by accident as for what it propagates by design. In his foreword, Lord Bridges recognizes these uses; but happily he recognizes also what will always remain, behind the refinements of analysis and the subtleties of interpretation, the primal fascination of film for the student as for anyone else, the brief materialization of irrecoverable life.

The catalogue inaugurates a new series which will cover all the NFA's holdings, with volumes on fiction and news film to come. Both categories, one needs to remember, (both categories, one needs to remember, one needs to remember) are of audience than more important. *Non-Fiction*, for how many people saw *Non-Fiction*. Rightly, though it means very nearly descriptions, the decision has been taken to enter every film, even if it has not yet been fully examined by the Archive's overworked cataloguers. The films are listed by country of production, and within countries alphabetically by year. There are

some 300 pages of title and subject indexes, though no index of directors, production companies, or sponsors. The work has been well done, and slips appear to be few (there is no entry number 875, some French accents are astray, and rare literals turn up, like "Warlimont" for "Warlimont"). Occasionally the indexing seems a trifle inconsistent: anyone looking for shots of Robert Helpmann and the Martha Graham company will not find from the subject index that they appear in reel 14 of the Wakehurst ballet collection, while Penner Brockway's appearance in *Nehru-Man of Two Worlds*, catalogued on the same page, is indexed under his name. In general, however, this is an admirable working guide to the Archive's collection.



A shot from Squadron 992 (1939), a film about the work of a Royal Air Force balloon squadron produced by Alberto Cavalcanti and directed by Harry Watt.

It could have been a little more. To use a collection to best effect one needs to know something about its genesis and the principles and methods of acquisition on which it rests. The National Film Archive is not like the Public Record Office or the British Library, and it is a pity that the opportunity has not been taken to explain fully the circumstances which account for some of the deficiencies and peculiarities of its holdings.

Started in 1935 by Ernest Lindgren, to whom this volume is very properly dedicated, the NFA arrived when much of the early production of the cinema was already lost or dispersed, and it has been struggling to keep pace with the stream of new material ever since, especially since the advent of television. British films account for about seventy-eight per cent of its non-fiction collection: the only other countries with substantial representation are the USA with 891 items and France with 373, including a number of early Lumière films. Yet as a

ably the last two figures at least reflect a habitual time-lag in acquisition, but they are not explained.

All this has to do with questions of finance, selection and acquisition which are ignored in the introduction by the Archive's Curator, David Francis. The NFA does not benefit from statutory deposit. It is not the only film archive in the country, and does not necessarily seek to obtain material falling into the province of, for example, the Scottish Film Archive, the various regional archives and the Imperial War Museum, which began to preserve film nearly twenty years before the NFA was founded. (Is it a pity that the NFA's collection is not the sum of all the film archives in the country? The reader who finds that the Archive possesses only a small section of *Ernie Jones* has no means of knowing that the IWM has a complete version.) Its selection of items for acquisition has long been based, in theory at least, on the recommendations of a series of selection committees (History and Current Affairs, Science, Television, etc.), on which

Seeing it straight

By Derek Malcolm

CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS (Editor):
Realism and the Cinema
285pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, with the British Film Institute. £10.
0 7100 0477 X

Our eyes, as Dziga Vertov once said, see very little and very badly. For Vertov, the great Russian film-maker, the answer was the cine-camera. It was able, like the telescope and microscope, to improve upon our view of the world. But it could penetrate even deeper, and more scientifically than either. It could, in the right hands, illuminate what was real by interpretation and by argument, so that we could "take proper account" in the future. Naturally, the bourgeoisie had other ideas. For it, reality with the camera was a mere chimera, a plaything to distract the masses and to

divert their attention from seeing straight. With such highly charged emotions was the early battle about realism in the cinema fought.

The battle was and still is, of course, the fight for the soul of both film-maker and film-watcher. And it is this wider context that sustains the reader through this dense, sometimes obtuse but ultimately rewarding film study. Mr Williams, Senior Lecturer in Film at the Polytechnic of Central London, looks the chapters on realist positions, forms and ideologies, and aesthetics and technology with a critical-communitarian eye. He tries not to regard Realism and Anti-realism as "strictly opposed polarities, glaring at each other across unbridgeable aesthetic and political divides".

His thesis is that there is art in the indirect realist, and that even the most rabid anti-realist is only trying to get nearer the truth in a less compromised way. That much is perhaps obvious. What is less so is how the relationship of films to each other,

outside specialists work in conjunction with its permanent staff, scanning the *British National Film Catalogue* and viewing as much as possible; but only a small proportion of what is chosen as worthy of preservation can in fact be acquired, because of the shortage of money. What is acquired depends heavily on the accident of donation. The last thing that can be expected to emerge is a comprehensive, representative collection, based on precisely defined and consistently applied principles, hard though everyone concerned tries.

What the Curator does explain - and it is worth noting this, in case crowd pressure in Dean Street should lead to disorder - is that in any case you cannot see all the films. Preservation is inevitably the first concern of an archive, and fragile and combustible nitrate film or unique preservation copies may not be available for viewing. Mr Francis writes of new facilities for the transfer of films to video cassettes which can be viewed on a television monitor, enabling "master negatives to viewed in a positive form". Leaving aside the questions of quality of reproduction by this method and of whether a television monitor can fulfil the function of a viewing table for the researcher, what proportion of the collection can now be seen? A decade ago, when the Archive first produced a list of its duplicate viewing copies, it was about seventeen per cent of the titles or twenty-four per cent of the footage. In recent years, a large programme of copying the steadily decomposing nitrate material which in 1969 formed over four-fifths of the collection has reduced one of the main grounds of unavailability - it is likely that the percentage of film viewable has risen appreciably, but it would be interesting to know.

The Archive badly needs money to increase the rate of acquisition and cataloguing and above all to facilitate the use of its resources. While its position as a division of the British Film Institute has had its advantages, its proper long-term development demands a different status, analogous to that of other great national record repositories. It could and should develop its own research arm - apart from Colin Ford's *Masks and Faces*, tracing the development of acting styles. It is hard to find here a single instance of the exploitation of its riches by its own staff. It cannot achieve real comprehensiveness without a system of statutory deposit, supported by Paul Channon among others when a private member's bill was promoted in 1969. Some effort to inform catalogue users of its problems and needs might have increased their understanding of its shortcomings and enlisted their support for its future. None the less, this volume will be of immense value. Alongside such aids to the plunder of other repositories as the British Universities Film Council's *Researcher's Guide to British Film and Television Collections*, it should do much to foster the study and enjoyment of film as an art form, a source of evidence, and a memento of the life that has been. If you missed that train at La Ciotat in 1895 or the Bacup Coronet Dance in 1950, you can still just catch them.

It has always been a matter of wonder to me, as a critic, that the same searchers after truth in what we can loosely term art, who would not be the least: upended by non-representational painting and sculpture, so often baulk at the first sight of non-narrative and/or experimental film. It is probably something to do with a cultural heritage that has, up to the last two decades, regarded the cinema almost as a plaything, like Vertov's bourgeoisie.

Books such as this, though often couched in language that for sheer intransigence can send one screaming towards the nearest fan magazine, help greatly to redress the balance. This volume job is primarily to inform. That it also illuminates, with clear examples from films, film-makers and theorists, is much to its credit.

John Coyle

A fizzling spook turned hack

By T. J. Binyon

VLADIMIR VOLKOFF:

The Turn-around

Translated by Alan Sheridan

410pp. The Bodley Head. £6.95.
0 370 30323 7

Lieutenant Volsky is a dandified young army officer attached to a minor French intelligence department. Threatened with return to his unit, and needing to justify his existence, he invents on the spur of the moment the bogus Operation Culverin and explains it as engineering the defection of Popov, a lecherous KGB major at the Soviet Embassy in Paris. With the help of his immediate superior — also under-employed — the operation is retrospectively authenticated; Marina Kraievsky, a beautiful but unsuccessful actress, former girlfriend of Volsky's and, like him, a second generation Russian émigré, is wound up and launched at Popov's susceptible head. After thoroughly dosing her with Marxist-Leninism, he eventually succumbs. More than that, when taken by Marina to an Orthodox service, he undergoes an immediate religious conversion and demands to be received by the church. It now turns out, however, that Popov's defection would undermine the security of a more important agent, code-named Greek Fire, and Volsky must reluctantly sacrifice his operation.

Like his hero-narrator Volsky, M. Volkoff is a Frenchman of Russian extraction. His novel originally appeared in French, in 1979, to be greeted by a uniform chorus of praise. Obligatory comparisons with Graham Greene and with Le Carré were drawn. "An indisputable novelist is born to us," wrote *Le Monde*, and *Le Matin* remarked, somewhat ambiguously: "Without a doubt the most astonishing book of the season . . . in truth one of the strongest of these past fifteen years."

One can understand the enthusiasm.

Exile, sound and fury

By David Gascoyne

FREDÉRIC TRISTAN:

Les tribulations héroïques de Balthazar Kober

231pp. Paris: Balland.

Fredéric Tristan's narrative of the travels, trials and transcendental experiences of Balthazar Kober comes as a striking confirmation of its author's gifts.

Balthazar Kober, we are told, was born about 400 years ago in Germany, near Dresden; a sickly child afflicted by a bad stammer, the sole survivor of his plague-ridden father's numerous progeny, all carried off early by plague or calamity. The father has been notably influenced by Theophrastus Bombastus: von Hohenheim, commonly known as Paracelsus, a name which, though it is mentioned only twice during the book, provides a hint of what will eventually become the underlying theme and possible interpretation of the novel as a whole. Unlike Tristan's previous novel, *Histoire d'Henriette et d'Armande* (1976), this one adheres to a straightforward temporal sequence, and concerns the wanderings and vicissitudes of a strangely exceptional youth, and his relationship with an archetypal "wise old man" endowed with rare spiritual perception and authority, one Frédéric Cammermeyer, who is regarded by the combined ecclesiastical and civic authorities of Silésia and Franconia as dangerously heretical and subversive. He finds himself constantly on the run, along with his young protégé Balthazar, in whom he has recognised the gift of what he designates "the sixth sense".

Neither the afflicted, unworshiped but by no means simple-minded Balthazar, nor his noble-hearted, clandestine alchemist mentor, can conceivably be described as rogues, but they are closely linked to a certain secret confederacy called the Galopins. When Balthazar first encounters Les

Galopins they appear to him in the guise of a band of straggling players, such as were commonly regarded as little better than "rogues and vagabonds". The members of this multinational fraternity make a point of deriving the basically Christian Kabbalistic tradition from which their tenets spring from the Latin word "caballus" rather than from the Hebrew, so as to explain the salient importance for them of the horse as emblematic animal. As soon as the donkey on which he has appropriately set out on his peregrinations has been replaced by a blithely unmanageable mare with which he is able immediately to establish an intimate rapport, Balthazar states in his "Livre de l'Exil" — a text dictated to him by some inner agency and fragments of which are interpolated into the narrative — that whoever has never known the love of horses will be incapable of understanding other places of reality, and that he believes this experience has been possible for him because these animals are endowed with the mighty wind of the Spirit.

Judged as a work of fiction, *Les tribulations héroïques de Balthazar Kober*, engrossing though it is, cannot be regarded as entirely satisfactory, if only because the ending, after a dramatic, poignant and sometimes violent series of readily described events, is of so unambitious and even conventional a nature that one is left with a feeling of unfulfilled expectation. This feeling is likely to be enhanced by the author's revelation, in the very last paragraph, that there is in fact exists another and different version of what he has told us because of the book's principal characters. The true conclusion of Tristan's novel, in fact, is to be thought of as Balthazar's accumulation of spiritual insights: or to other words, the twenty-three works he is said to have published subsequent to the happy ending of the novel — his marriage with Rosa, a young woman member of the Galopins to whom he has been increasingly drawn since the moment of their first encounter.

Here Tristan comes up against the near

impossibility of conveying convincingly the special, rare quality of an Imagist's work of philosophical mysticism. The fragmentary chapters that are actually quoted in the course of the narrative — abruptly and without quotation marks — from Kober's first transcendental dictated work are remarkably beautiful, but, as the novel's title might have led one to expect, expressive on the whole of a lamentable desolation. The passages quoted from "Le Livre d'Exil" suggest nevertheless a genuine experience of some fundamental spiritual reality and are, for me, with certain of the transcriptions made by Jean-Paul (Richard) of his dreams.

Mention must also be made of the city wherein the novel reaches its end, though its hero's life and quest for fulfillment do not. Venice, which obviously occupies a quite special place in M. Tristan's mind and work, appearing to represent for him both the culmination of our civilization, as typified by its art and architecture, and at the same time, in the author's own words, "the meeting-place of two tributaries, a dialogue between two kinds of absence".

The cover-note of *Les tribulations héroïques de Balthazar Kober* concludes by describing it as a novel of adventure and love that can be considered at the same time as a powerful reflection on the human being who is prey to a world "full of sound and fury" — adding that "all of which is not doubt scarcely different from our own. This is probably the most obvious point to be made about *Les tribulations héroïques*, that, despite being at first sight, a "historical" novel about the confounding world of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, abounding with diverse intellectual and spiritual outcrops and counter-currents, its importance is to be found in its unambiguous relevance to today. It is written in an eminently readable, I might say, "classical" French style. I believe it may be said without too much exaggeration that this novel has as many layers of "meaning" as an onion has skins, though the reader need not feel obliged to peel off any of them before reading it with pleasure.

Lydia Maria takes refuge with Raphael's

Little boy lost

By D. M. Thomas

ALEXANDRA KOLLONTAI:

A Great Love
Translated and introduced by Cathy Porter
156pp. Virago. £2.50.
0 86068 188 2

Alexandra Kollontai left Russia in 1922 to take up a diplomatic post in Scandinavia. In Oslo, in that year, she wrote her novella *A Great Love*, and the better-known *Love of Worker Bees* (already published by Virago, in a translation by Cathy Porter, Kollontai's biographer). Her departure from Russia reflected the Party's growing distrust for a woman who had served their cause devotedly but who expressed uncomfortably "deviations" — views on society, and especially on the rights of women in an independent life. More radical than the radicals, by 1923 she was being denounced, absurdly, as decadent and bourgeois.

A Great Love is a study of the conflicting demands of love and work in a woman's life. Its concluding paragraph reads like propaganda: "So learn from this, all you men who have made women suffer through your blindness, and know that if you injure a woman's heart you will kill her love!" But in fact this is the first time that the author departs from a scrupulous artistic honesty. Natasha and Senya, who share the "great love" of the title, are flesh-and-blood human beings who arouse our interest and sympathy. Admittedly, the story is narrated through the consciousness of the young woman, Natasha; she is much more fully-drawn, as well as being a much nicer person, than her lover. But he is more than the "emotional shadow" Cathy Porter describes him as being in her otherwise excellent introduction. Kollontai lets us know exactly what he is feeling and what is motivating him; and when, at the end, he receives the punishment he surely deserves — the loss of Natasha's love — she lets us feel a stab of compassion for him; for we know that he has been following the dictates of his own male nature as surely as Natasha has been following her feminine one. He is insufferable, but humanly and believably so.

The story is set ten years before the Bolshevik Revolution; Natasha and Senya are brought together by their part in the developing struggle. Senya is one of the leading lights, and is moreover encumbered with a wife and children; Natasha serves the cause more humbly, and is a free woman. The story begins with what they both think is the end of their relationship — a unity of love and work?

Back to life

By Galen Strawson

MAGGI LIDCHIL

The First Wife
208pp. Gollancz. £6.95.
0 575 02786 X

Noumenique premar in annum, membrum intus patet. Has Maggi Lidchil followed Horace's advice, and kept the manuscript of *The First Wife* in a drawer for nine years? Or is it just that it has been a long time in the writing? Or is it rather that Ms Lidchil lives in a place — the Sri Aurobindo ashram — where time has stood still since about 1970, preserving miraculously unchanged the manners and customs of the (Western) young of a decade ago? In any case, the book almost qualifies as a historical novel — Tuppy and his friends here. "Wow, too much" engraved on their hearts. Their manner has the paradoxically alien and, in the event, touching, quality of the recently familiar but forever vanished.

Tuppy is the son of Olivia, an English woman married to a university lecturer in English, Raphael Founex, and very comfortably off in the suburbs of Johannesburg. Two decades of happy marriage are put at risk when the beautiful twenty-year-old Maria turns up, on their doorstep. She claims to be the reincarnation of Raphael's first wife Lydia, who died in childbirth, and she is determined to lose her virginity to her husband. She knows all sorts of intimate things about Raphael, and though he remains sceptical and thoroughly irritated, Olivia reluctantly comes to believe her.

affair — his wife is ill, he feels guilty and sends Natasha away. She buries her head in the cause, recalling their relationship in a series of lyrical flashbacks. After seven months, just when her spirits are beginning to revive, she receives a telegram from her old lover, telling her to wait him for a clandestine holiday and to bring money for the hotel expenses. Love and torment revive in her; with great difficulty she scrapes the money together. On the train to the rendezvous, she is in a fever of joyous expectation; but when Senya meets her at the station, he scarcely greets her, and strides ahead of her towards the hotel — fearful of being recognized in her company. Once in the dingy hotel room, he completes the destruction of her romantic dream by leaving her to her ungraciously to make love. Then, almost immediately, he goes off to visit a certain professor to discuss political theory; and indeed he spends most of their romantic holiday at his home. Natasha is left alone, apart from the occasional snatched breakfast or tea with him. Yet she tolerates her gross ill-treatment because she reveres the work he is doing (though he treats her work with condescension). She forgives him, too, because he is such a little child at heart: that familiar trap, for a woman, of her maternal feelings.

Byron's aphorism, "Man's love is of man's life a thing apart", admirably describes Senya's situation. Natasha's work, on the other hand, does suffer when she is in an emotional state. Kollontai, while making on behalf of her sex a passionate protest for equal rights, does not over-simplify the problem: she is far too good an artist to do that. And there remains the troubling question of why such an intelligent, sensitive young woman as Natasha should be so emotionally enslaved to a man who is — when it is said and done — a shit. He knows he is and at the end, sending with terror that he may have killed her love for him, he tries to make some amends; but, too before time, the worm turns. Even Natasha has had enough. When they get, she knows she will not see him again; his mistress, nor wish to; yet she still rejects her "little boy" by not subjecting him to the truth he is incapable of facing. She goes away to throw herself into her work. But can her angelicness last? Will she not need the impossible again — a unity of love and work?

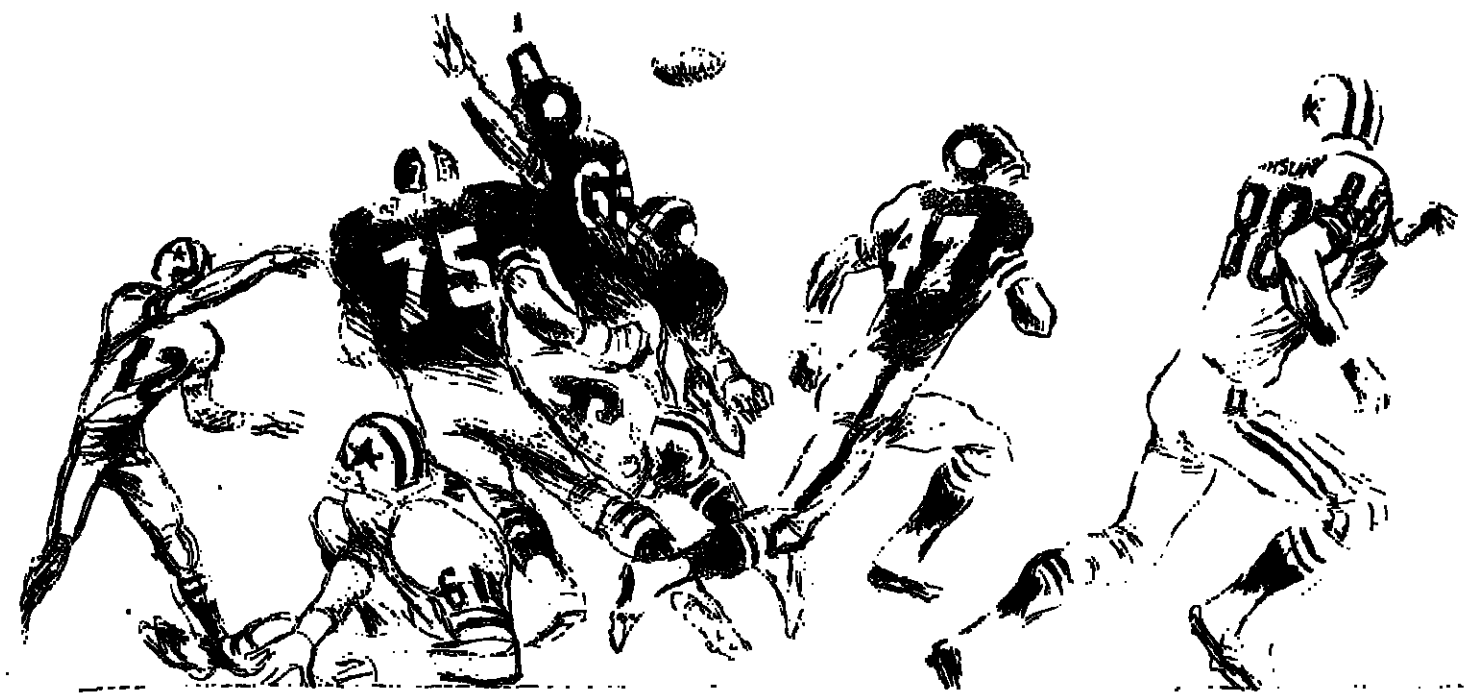
A Great Love is based on the relationship — probably sexual — between Lenin and Inessa Armand. This adds considerably to its interest; and it also succeeds on its own fictional terms, as a simple yet subtle psychological study, at times gracefully lyrical, at times delightfully sardonic.

expensive and melodramatic mother, Rebecca, and settles down to a life of attrition. Historians and hunger strikers. Rebecca becomes alarmed and calls in Mummy, the doctor, who makes it clear to Olivia that, for forestall psychiatric treatment (dread), Raphael (the schlemiel) has got to see the girl (who's a mess).

Thus a new set of complications arises. Tuppy takes Lydia Maria to his father's mistress, and runs away to meditate in a cave: his hippy ideas do not extend to his parents' marriage. In despair, finds her life being structured by two diametrically opposed characters, a little old Englishman, (forgive me Walter de la Mare), and Fred, who's beautiful, sexually all-conquering, magnificently egotistical, and yet endearing.

This is a book of sensibility, warmth, and great good humour. One feels that profound and unabashed, yet moderated hedonism lies behind it — a hedonism whose two poles are defined by Olivia and Rebecca. Olivia's mystical episodes are convincing and attractive precisely because she is at peace with her privileged life; and that is because she is that she travels far and fast in her religious experience, straight to the point at which she can see the major renunciation involved in going any further.

Maggi Lidchil is an amusing writer, but there's something incomplete about the ending of *The First Wife*, and the book is continuously on the point of dissolving into a whirl of stereotypes — the characters are pushed to the point of caricature. It's a pity, because the book is so good. It's a pity, too, that as the faces pick up speed, the author never has time to regain the steady insight and aplomb of the first forty pages of so.



Mother-tongue and other tongue

By D. J. Enright

ALBERT H. MARCKWARDT:

American English
Second Edition
Revised by L. Dillard
192pp. Oxford University Press. £7.25.
0 19 50260 4

RUGENE KIRLICH, STUART BERG FLEXNER, GORDON CARPENTH, JOYCE M. HAWKINS
Oxford American Dictionary
810pp. Oxford University Press. £9.95.
0 19 502793 7

Naturally enough, it is in the interest of philologists — the term "linguist" won't do it — that it has come to signify two such different categories as "1. a student of linguistics" and "2. a person who knows foreign languages well" — it is in the interest of philologists (including lexicographers) to make the most of the difference between British English and American English. Yet H. L. Mencken's theory that British and American would diverge increasingly has hardly been borne out. No doubt the two-way flow of books, films, television programmes and personnel has interfered — along with human quickness to adopt words and phrases that take the fancy and can fairly readily be understood and assimilated. The Menckens theory allows for individuality and growth but not sufficiently for mutuality and interchange. The authors of *American English* (hereafter published in 1958, now revised by J. L. Dillard) are very reasonable on this point: "A Yorkshireman and an Alabamian will not understand each other easily and without some effort, but they will understand one another. Using whatever skills of verbal communication each has acquired, virtually any American speaker can establish spoken communication with virtually any British speaker."

Equally naturally, American speakers of English — who, according to *American English*, outnumber British speakers of English by four to one — prefer their own spelling, pronunciation and terminology. The *Oxford American Dictionary* (hereafter *OAD*) makes one think how very many words the British and the Americans have in common, and how frequently they use, pronounce and spell them in much the same way. Where the great mass of language is concerned, it would be no fearful hardship for both nationalities to share one dictionary.

There is a feeling couplet that could well be prefixed to any anthology, and dictionaries are a kind of anthology: "For what was there, what was cared a joy? — But all were worth, with what was said." It is too easy to complain of omissions, less easy to praise what is present. I shall be content to mention less pleasurable, to give credit for what is present. I shall be content to mention the new *OAD* with *Collins English Dictionary* (1979) and the sixth edition (1976) of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (*COD*). This is less than fair, in obvious respects, if only because *Collins* is larger in format and has 1,690 pages of entries to *OAD*'s 810 pages; while *COD*, though the smallest in format, runs to 1,360 pages.

However, *OAD* alone follows "schuss" (a straight downhill run on skis) with "schussbomber": "a skier who executes a 'schuss' with skill", whereas *Collins* and *COD* content themselves with

But I cannot think of another way of describing a dictionary. As for costs, *OAD* sells at £9.95 in this country, while *Collins* and *COD* are currently priced at £9.95 and £7.75 respectively.

Of OAD one asks how many specifically American words, or words whose US meanings differ from their British, it alone contains — and the answer seems to be: not so many. *OAD* lists both "hominy" (mentioned in *American English* as one of the strange foods encountered by settlers in Virginia and Massachusetts) and "hominy grits". *COD* has the former and includes the latter in its definition, which is less precise (no reference to "hulled and dried" kernels), while *Collins*, listing them separately, is virtually identical with *COD*. Checking on other words of American origin, we are told by both *Collins* and *COD* that "persimmon" is of Algonquian provenance: "hooch" is attributed to Tlingit by *Collins* and to Alaskan by *COD*. "Mugwump" (great man, boss; one who holds aloof from party politics, or one who sits on the fence) is ascribed to Algonquian by both *Collins* and *COD*, the latter's definition being fuller, while *American English* says it comes from a Native word, and gives a still fuller account: in 1884 the term was applied to bolters from the Republican party who supported the Democratic nominee for president, but it has since been used, often in a thoroughly complimentary fashion, to indicate an independent in politics, though the recent folk-etymology analysis of the term, as one who has his "mug" on one side of the fence and his "wump" on the other, has again given it a jocular and somewhat unfavourable connotation.

Both *COD* and *Collins* ascribe "potlatch", tribal feast, to Chinook from Nootka, though only *Collins* gives the secondary *US* informal usage, "a wild party or revel". *Collins* makes no mention of the derivation of "Tammammy" (as in "Tammammy Hall") while *COD* states that it comes from a seventeenth-century Indian chief friendly to Whites via its use as the name of a benevolent society. In New York. When these two dictionaries, not avowedly American, can give this interesting American etymological information, it seems strange that a specifically American dictionary cannot. Even stranger is that "Tammammy" and "potlatch" are not to be found in *OAD* at all.

As for borrowings from other languages, while *OAD* includes "Blitzkrieg", "flak" and "Zeigzeig", the pleasing "Kris and Kringle" (spelt in *American English* as "Kris") — meaning Santa Claus and coming from the German "Christkindl", little Christ-child — is listed only in *Collins*. That word may well be rare, and so excluded from the anonymously "everyday" *OAD*, but the same cannot be said of "gay" and "shiksa", neither of which is in *OAD*, though *Collins* lists both and *COD*, the former, "Goffie fish", however, is present, as also in *OAD*, though not in *COD*.

However, *OAD* alone follows "schuss" (a straight downhill run on skis) with "schussbomber": "a skier who executes a 'schuss' with skill", whereas *Collins* and *COD* content themselves with

"schuss". *OAD*'s explanation of "Caribbean" solely by reference to the Caribbean Sea is rather bleak, there being no entry for "Carib", while the definition of "amash" as simply "a nuremaid" with no mention of its Eastern context, is misleading. "Aga Kahn", however, must be merely a misprint, by confusion with its pronunciation.

Incidentally, the Oxford Press's handout for *OAD* remarks that for Americans a jug is a pitcher and a nappy is a diaper: true, "diaper" is in and "nappy" out, but "pitcher" is defined as "a jug". However, another difference in vocabulary mentioned in the handout, "brown bagging" (taking lunch to work from home, or carrying one's own wine into a restaurant), is absent from the British dictionaries. *OAD* has no "brown bread" (not favoured in US households), but contains "browned off", which *Collins* describes as informal, chiefly BrE. The British may prefer "lend" to "loan" as a verb, but we understand the latter, just as Americans understand the former: in fact the *OAD* gives both forms, adding that "Many writers prefer lend over loan as a verb". And if you are puzzled by the slang word "humungous", then only *OAD* among the three will enlighten you: "huge, tremendous. Loosely based on huge and enormous".

The definitions in *OAD* tend to be on the meagre (meagre) side. "Gelatin": "A Japanese hostess trained to entertain men by dancing and singing". Distinctly superior is the *Collins* entry: "a professional female companion for men in Japan, trained in music, dancing, and the art of conversation"; while *COD*, without making a song and dance about it, ventures boldly (and knowingly) into what is indeed an imprecise and baggy appellation with: "Japanese hostess entertaining men with dance and song; Japanese prostitute". Then there is "womanizer": "(of a man) seek the company of women for sexual purposes" — surely a defective definition, since the majority of men "seek the company of women" etc at some point or another. *Collins* gives "(of a man) to indulge in many casual affairs with women; philander", and *COD* has "(of man) philander, consort illicitly with women" — women, it would seem, never womanize! — while both give a secondary meaning: "make effeminate" (*Collins*), "make womanish" (*COD*).

Pair enough, "arse" is absent from *OAD*; "ass" is there, but there is no "ass-licking", where both *Collins* and *COD* give this indispensable expression in its "arse" form and append "chiefly US: ass". Possibly the compilers of *OAD* do not want to distract its users with mention of British forms — or can it be that, as I have suspected for some time, the famous contrast between American inter-nationism and British insularity is by no means as absolute as supposed? For "pusy" *OAD* has ("children's use") a cat, but *Collins* and *COD* have "cat", actually lists "miniscule" (a solecism not to be seen in the other two dictionaries), despite its claim that it "seems high, somewhat conservative standards in usage". If

the *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, Unabridged Edition of 1966, lists the vulg use of "prick" but not that of "cock", "That 'fuck' and 'frig' are left out might be thought a mark of distinction these days; 'bugger' in its several senses is also lacking (though 'sodomy' is present: "a copulation-like act . . ."). Whether or not the *OAD* will help us line up (US slang, unlisted) in our tussles with American fiction, it hardly seems likely to foster in its American users an understanding of the British way of speech.

But that's quite enough dirt. The *OAD*, I would guess, is a "family dictionary", which explains such omissions and accounts for the absence of the expression "bad-mouth" (typically US, I had supposed, not solely Black American), included in both *Collins* and *COD*. And yet when I looked up the word "massage" (purely in the course of moving on from the Finnish borrowing, "sauna", as discussed by Messrs Markwardt and Dillard) I came across a piece of plain speaking not to be heard in either of the British dictionaries: "massage parlour: an establishment for massage and prostitution".

That *OAD* does not give etymologies is a cause for sadness not to be passed over lightly. Aside from being interesting in themselves in all sorts of ways, etymologies help to define words, not all of which can be satisfactorily defined by other words. One such example is "Yankee", which *OAD* glosses colourfully as "1. an American. 2. an inhabitant of the northern states of the US, especially New England". *Collins* refers to the possible derivation from Dutch Jan Kees (John Cheese), "nickname used derisively by Dutch settlers in New York to designate English colonists in Connecticut", and *COD* to Dutch Janke, diminutive of Jan (John), or perhaps *Jengels*, the American Indian pronunciation of "English". Information of this kind is material, not just a luxury.

It should be said in favour of *OAD* that the print is immediately legible and its nicely on thickish paper which (unlike the thin paper of *Collins*, but then there are a great many papers there), will not crease easily and turns over well, one leaf readily separating from another, and ought to stand hard wear. Also, pronunciation is more plainly indicated than in *Collins*. Then *OAD* carries simple, useful tips on grammar and on words that are easily confused, such as "abjure" and "adure", "Calvary" and "cavalry", "effect" and "affect" (though the fashionable noun use of the latter is forgivably absent). In connection with the (second) use of "hopelessly", as "it is to be hoped" it warns readers that "Many people regard the second use as unacceptable"; both *COD* and *Collins* accept it without demur or comment. Against that — horrors! — *OAD* actually lists "miniscule" (a solecism not to be seen in the other two dictionaries), despite its claim that it "seems high, somewhat conservative standards in usage". If

This etching "Super Bowl" (1976) by LeRoy Neiman is taken from a lavish edition of his work. The Prints of LeRoy Neiman: A Catalogue Raisonné of Serigraphs, Lithographs, and Etchings with a preface by Alfred Frankenstein and text by F. Lanier Graham (364pp. Collier Macmillan. £45.00 937008 009). The Super Bowl is the equivalent in American football of the Cup Final and Neiman, one of the most popular of sports artists, was the Official Artist of the 1960 Olympic Games. His work is notable for his use of colour which ranges from the bold to the garish. Frankenstein writes in his Preface that "One of his favorite color schemes is spurling, spattering blood-red being pounded through ice".

"miniscule" is accepted usage in American, then of course I apologize, faintly.

OAD certainly appears to be strong on abbreviations and acronyms, "M.O." featuring in four senses: mail order, money order, medical officer and (always cropping up among educated police officers in American television series) method of operation or *modus operandi*. "CATV" is community antenna television, elsewhere defined as "a system for transmitting television signals employing cable and a single large antenna". "YST" means Yukon Standard Time, while "COLA" turns out to be Cost-Of-Living Adjustment. "CCC" is credited with two significances. Civilian Conservation Corps and Commodity Credit Corporation, whereas *Collins* has no entry and the best *COD* can do is Corpus Christi College. All three list "FOE", port of entry, but only *Black American*, included in both *Collins* and *COD*. And yet when I looked up the word "massage" (purely in the course of moving on from the Finnish borrowing, "sauna", as discussed by Messrs Markwardt and Dillard) I came across a piece of plain speaking not to be heard in either of the British dictionaries: "massage parlour: an establishment for massage and prostitution".

American English offers entertaining anecdotes of the kind that most lexicographers, albeit they are dealing in the greatest comedians known to man, must perform deny themselves. Thus the cosmopolitan hybrid, "Chinese Smorgasbord", and the information that, despite the popularity of Italian food, "pizzeria" failed to catch on because of its closeness to "piss-soir", the scarcely better spelt-out form "pizzaria" occasionally being used instead. The word or non-word "burger" can boast an eventful history, beginning in 1884 with "Hamburger steak" (meat presumed to come from Hamburg, which was shortened to "hamburger" by 1901, and then transferred to signify a sandwich made by serving fried ground beef in a bun. Thereafter "burger" took on a life or half-life of its own, proliferating into cheeseburger, chickenburger, turkeyburger, lamburger, fishburger, riceburger, pizzaburger, *inter alia*. The joke was: "We got one made out of ham, too, but we don't know what to call it."

"God is in heaven, and thou upon earth", it says in the Good Book, "therefore let thy words be few." And so, to conclude, *Collins* is a fine, ambitious and wide-ranging dictionary, medium to large in size. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* is an excellent small-to-medium, and indeed concise dictionary. The monograph *American English* is a sober, modest, lucid and well-written short history of language in America from the Mayflower up to the present (and, into the possible future of English as a universal second language). The *Oxford American Dictionary* is medium in size but small in sophistication, intended primarily for Americans (in particular, one would venture, White, middle-class, respectable), but even so with an air of parochiality about it, and perhaps best regarded as a "basic" tool, compiled (as it states) "for everyday use in home, school, office, and library". Like *American English*, it is sober, modest and, within its limits, lucid. It might be well written in it except that there is not very much writing in it.

Johannes

From a seat in the stadium

By Walter Laqueur

CHRISTOPHER BOOKER:

The Games War
A Moscow Journal
236pp, Faber, £5.95,
0 571 11755 4

Christopher Booker went last year to the Olympic Games (and to Moscow) for the first time in his life; he did so with an ideal briefing from his editor — to regard himself as an artist, recording whatever caught his eye. The first impressions of an acute observer are always of interest; the result in this case is a highly readable politico-literary travelogue with some occasional glances in the direction of the Lenin stadium. It is not, however, entirely obvious why Mr Booker should have found this an "overwhelming experience", "almost impossible to describe".

Seen in retrospect, the Games had much less propaganda effect than the Soviet leaders hoped or their critics feared. It is unlikely, for instance, that the sale of Soviet books in English will shoot up as a result or that the number of tourists to Russia from the West will be greater in 1981 than it was in 1979. It is doubtful, in fact, whether anyone changed his views about the Soviet Union one way or another as a result of

attending the Games, which by now, in any case, are already more than half forgotten. The same was true in 1936. The Berlin Games of that year had no lasting effect on public opinion outside Germany: true, for a few months the Nazi regime became slightly more respectable, but by the end of the year the mass parades had been forgotten, and only a few highlights were remembered, such as Jesse Owens's victories. If we are still interested in the Games of 1936 it is not because they changed history, but because — as with the Moscow Games — they revealed so much naivety on the part of well-meaning people and a disturbing lack of sense and sensitivity on the part of some who should have known better.

What impressed Booker was not so much the ability of the Soviet authorities to stage-manage mass demonstrations and to perfect crowd control — few ever doubted their capacities in this direction — but the stubborn refusal of Western sports bureaucrats and others to admit that the Games were a political demonstration, and that they were willing accessories in the Soviet Union's propaganda exercises. But why single out poor Lord Killanin or Sir Denis Follows or the others? There is no denying that they expressed the wishes of the majority, probably the great majority, of sportsmen and women who wanted to participate in the Games. It goes without saying that this had nothing to do with Marxism or Soviet propaganda; there is every reason to believe that if the issue had been Berlin in 1936 all over again, attitudes would have been much the same.

It could have been pointed out that South Africa had been excluded from the Olympic movement: so why not the Soviet Union? But this is hardly a convincing argument, for if South Africa was a superpower, and had the unconditional support of a dozen or more satellites, it would not have had to worry about a boycott: there is clearly no equal law for all.

There was, then, the widespread belief, reinforced by powerful vested interests, that the Games had to go on irrespective of all other considerations. At work here were the attitudes of a consumer society for which entertainment has become a supreme value, and it is perhaps not surprising that Booker returned from Moscow sounding a bit like Solzhenitsyn on the West's lack of moral fibre. Life in the Soviet Union (Booker concluded) is certainly a more serious business than it is over here: "The peoples of the East have not been affected by so much that has trivialized and debilitated life in the West". That backwardness has its advantages has been known to economists for a long time, but it should also be noted that the trends and inclina-

tions he observes in the West also exist in Soviet society; indeed the return to certain bourgeois values and habits there has been even more pronounced.

This I believe is not quite clear to Booker and as a result he comes to some mistaken conclusions about Soviet society. One example should suffice. He juxtaposes the close relationships which he sees prevailing in English families with the loosening of family ties and a general dehumanization in the Soviet Union. He refers to the vital protection and emotional support given to Steve Oveit by his mother, notes that Sebastian Coe and his father were almost inseparable, that "Auntie Doreen" who adopted Daley Thompson played a crucial part in his athletic career, that Gary Oakes (who won an unexpected bronze medal in the 400 metres hurdles) owes almost everything to the efforts of his father, a Camden Town coalman, and so forth. All this is no doubt true and admirable, but the perspective becomes a little distorted when the author sets this picture of domestic warmth against the inhuman coldness of a society in which children are taught to admire Pavel Morozov, the boy who was killed by peasants in 1932 because he reported his fear for boarding grain which should have gone to the State. He quotes the chilling story, told by another reporter of the Soviet scene, of a Swedish diplomat who asked his young son temporarily attending a Soviet school, which grown-ups did he most respect? The boy replied "Lenin" and then went through the Soviet hierarchy from Brezhnev to the district Communist party secretary, not once naming his parents.

These things are disturbing but to what extent do they reflect Soviet realities? Pavel Morozov has not been a hero of Soviet youth for a long time and the idea of the party secretary of, say, the Baumann or Krasnaya Presna region in Moscow being a ten-year-old child would cause much amusement to most Soviet citizens. Even if such lunacies were taught, they would be more or less automatically rejected or perhaps just ignored. Soviet citizens early on in their lives develop a sense of cynicism; they learn that there are various levels of truth, and that official truth has to be repeated ritually but not necessarily accepted and believed. Such pervasive cynicism may be a matter of concern, but its existence hardly warrants the assumption that family life is somehow less close in the Soviet Union than in this country.

People in communist societies are generally speaking far less interested in politics than is commonly supposed in the West, and all close observers agree that the retreat to the private sphere in these countries has become even more widespread during the

last two decades. The silent majority will remain silent, because a free hand has been given to the professionals who have chosen politics as a career and who are, to put it politely, not always the most positive elements in communist society.

This inevitably leads to the central question about the direction in which the Soviet Union is now moving. Booker, echoing Churchill, states that "no nation on earth has presented such an enigma as Russia". But is this really true? Russia should be no more of a mystery than any other country for anyone willing to make a modest effort to learn the basic facts about it, even though a certain amount of imagination is needed, on the part of people who have had the good luck to grow up in democratic societies, to understand the working of societies in which there is little or no freedom. A good case can in fact be made in favour of the proposition that America is a far less predictable country than the Soviet Union. Booker quotes Sir Bernard Pares, writing in 1940, that "you can always see at once whether anyone talking about Russia has really lived there; it is a kind of treasurery entirely independent of both class and view". Pares contributed more than anyone else to the academic study of Russia in Britain and yet despite a lifetime of experience he was disastrously wrong in his judgments about the character of the revolution in 1917, and about Lenin and Stalin; in the end he even believed that the Moscow trials of the 1930s were just and fair.

The example seems to contradict the point I have just been trying to make: if even the great expert had been so wrong, how can ordinary mortals be expected to get their facts and opinions about this mysterious country right? But the contradiction is more apparent than real. Pares's experience was limited to pre-revolutionary Russia; he never really understood Bolshevism, the revolution and what happened after. In his case, as with some of his contemporaries, intimate knowledge of Tsarist Russia was a hindrance, not an advantage.

But there has been no similar watershed in recent decades; the Soviet system has been in existence for a long time. It has changed remarkably little, it is thoroughly conservative and the reasons that can be adduced to explain Pares's failure to understand cannot possibly explain the errors of today. Nor can one fairly put most of the blame on Soviet misinformation. There was (and is) a massive effort in this direction, but it has on the whole been remarkably unsuccessful. The real problem is not deception, but self-deception; or, more accurately perhaps, intellectual laziness. Hence the widespread inclination towards

"mirror imaging", the assumption that the Soviet Union and its satellites are, *grasso modo*, societies like our own, that life in these societies does not substantially differ from life in the West and that, but for the reprehensible meddling of the politicians, and especially the cold warriors among them, the existing barriers to ever better mutual understanding and coexistence would soon come down. The reason for this lack of comprehension are deeply rooted and there is unfortunately no good reason to assume that there will be a substantial change in this respect in the foreseeable future.

There is little, too little, about sport in this "Moscow Journal", which is a pity because Soviet sport offers certain insights into the way the regime works. Various interpretations, some of them more than a little outlandish, have been adduced to explain Soviet and East German successes. Yet the real reasons are simple and obvious. There is, to begin with, greater enthusiasm in the communist countries for active sports.

For a number of reasons sport is given by the state far higher priority than in the West, the resources allocated are much greater, and the approach is relatively competitive — this is also true with regard to the systematic use of drugs. There is no room at the top level for amateurism in Soviet and East German sport, except perhaps in those contexts in which national ability counts for almost everything and training for comparatively little — e.g. the short sprint distances. Eastern bloc sportsmen and women are not innately fitter, stronger and more skilled than their counterparts from other parts of the world, they are only better prepared. Whoever they compete on equal terms, that is as professionals, for instance in soccer, the advantages of the Soviet and East German political and social system are not really obvious. With the exception of ice-hockey, which is played only in a handful of countries, Soviet and East European competitors have not done very well in team sports — precisely the disciplines in which one would expect them to excel; the reasons remain to be explored. Again, it would be unfair to blame the Russians for their highly professional approach; it is not their fault if Western sports bureaucrats continue to maintain that all is well in the world of sports and that Western and Eastern Southern and Northern competitors meet on equal terms at the Olympic Games world championships and other such occasions. Where the capacity to generate humming is concerned, there seems to be no business like sports business.

It was perhaps inevitable that Makarios should make this mistake, because, shrewd as he was, he had little knowledge of the great world outside his island. His experience overseas, except in Athens, was very slight. When he studied in the USA, his English was limited and his acquaintances were mostly other Greeks or American churchmen. Admittedly he had more worldly wisdom than his uncomfortable ally, Colonel Grivas, the leader of the armed rebellion in Cyprus, but that is not saying much. He was much less well equipped than Karamanlis, who became Prime Minister of Greece soon after the rebellion began.

Yet Makarios wanted to control the policy not only of the Cypriot Greeks but also of the mainland government. Every time he visited Athens as Archbishop (which included the title of Ethnarch or "leader of the nation" as well), a communique on his talks with the Greek authorities announced "complete agreement on policy". But more often than not, Makarios then went home and did something quite different, with which he deceived the Greek government to conform. Both Karamanlis and his successor, George Papandreu, wrote exasperated letters to Makarios saying, almost in the same words: "We agree on one thing, you do nothing".

There was probably no hope of achieving *enosis* for an undivided Cyprus after the Greeks, with Makarios in the van, rejected the constitutional proposal of Lord Radcliffe at the end of 1956. But Makarios Grivas and even Karamanlis still hoped for it after the Zürich and London agreements expressly ruled it out in 1959. Their ways of trying to achieve it were different. Makarios believed in cunning, Grivas in force, Karamanlis in diplomacy. The first two not only frustrated each other but fatally handicapped the third. Even diplomacy had no chance once the scene was invaded by the monstrous figures of the Greek Colonels in 1967.

In this sad story Makarios cuts a tragic and not unattractive figure. He was too big for Cyprus but too small for the larger world. Mayes presents him, wars and all, with sympathy and impartiality. He shows the most attractive side of Makarios's character in defeat: first in exile in the Seychelles, and then in the last days of his life, when "his courtesy and consideration for others remained to the end". But these qualities of personal charm will not help the reader to the fact that Mayes also rightly calls him hypocritical and "divine". He compares Makarios with the "saviour" apprentice, and his sermons with those of Canon Chasuble.

CUBA

Twenty years of Castro

By Hugh Thomas

ARTHUR MACEWAN:

Revolution and Economic Development in Cuba
265pp, Macmillan, £20,
0 333 28306 6

Arthur MacEwan's study of Cuba, written from a Marxist perspective (as his publishers insist it on the dust-cover), is full of statistics, but there are three simple ones which he omits, and indeed he makes almost no mention of the facts which lie behind them: first, that Cuba since the Revolution has had an annual growth rate per capita of minus 1.2 per cent (World Development Report, 1981, for 1960-78); second, that the Cuban armed forces of some 200,000 men or more, are larger than those of any other state in Latin America except for Brazil — indeed per head of population Cuba probably has more men under arms than any other country in the world. Third, whereas in 1959 Cuba, despite disparities of distribution, was one of the two or three richest Latin American states, she is now one of the two or three poorest: at a national income of \$810 per head per year (again I take the figure from the World Development Report), she is less well off than most of her neighbours — Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, even Colombia and Mexico.

The reality behind these figures is not easily understood. The main point to emphasize is that in economic terms the word "Revolution" in MacEwan's title is a misnomer. In 1958 Cuba was certainly a country which depended much more than was good for it on sugar. As the World Bank had pointed out, in a famous report of 1950, diversification was necessary if Cuba's "much treasured liberties" were to survive. Some diversification had been achieved by the end of the 1950s but the political revolution achieved by Castro put an end to it. All those, for example, who had been trying to build up the sale of winter vegetables to the East coast of the United States were ruled by Castro's determination to have a row with that country. The crudeness, ignorance, over-simplification and intolerance of the Revolutionary Government alienated a whole class of managers who ought otherwise to have assisted economic diversification.

Thus by the late 1960s, Cuba was investing heavily in new sugar equipment, while today the predominance of sugar in the Cuban economy is greater than it has ever been — reckoned either as a percentage of exports or as a contribution to the GDP. In purely economic terms, the consequence of the Revolution has been to strengthen the hold of this monocrop and to reverse the trends towards diversification which had begun, modestly and tardily, by 1958. At the same time, sugar production itself has remained only at about the same aggregate level as it was in the 1950s, while Cuba's share of a still expanding world market for sugar has steadily shrunk. A final irony is provided by the fact that the Soviet Union, Cuba's new trading partner *par excellence*, is today the world's largest sugar producer as a result of the major growth in production which took place there while Cuba was ailing.

Professor MacEwan attributes the astounding economic stagnation in Cuba since 1960 not entirely to the United States blockade of the island but to bad habits formed in the age of colonialism and underdevelopment. If this were indeed so, it would seriously discredit the idea of revolutionary "vanguardism". Having enjoyed twenty years of total power a revolutionary "vanguard" in the shape of the Cuban Communist party (now reformed to give Castro and his co-referents their place) surely ought to have been able to do a little more than this? Particularly if the vanguard concerned is trying to point the way to the truth to the suffering peoples of Nicaragua, El Salvador, Angola, Ethiopia *et al?* Alas, it was not to be.

The real explanation of what has gone wrong, had little to do with the United States; with "underdevelopment" or with "colonialism". In the early 1960s, as part of its general inoperative quarrel with the United States (which started to interest itself in Caribbean, with consequences speaking), the Cuban government took over not only the commanding heights of the economy but most of its small hilltops as well. The confusion was absolute, given that, understandably no

doubt in the appalling circumstances, politically reliable ignoramuses were often appointed to control large enterprises, and given that Ernesto Guevara, as the symbolically great revolutionary minister of industries, was intent on such romantic projects as making Cuba independent in steel — perhaps his finest legacy was the toothpaste factory which allegedly produced a substance that turned to stone on exposure to the air.

At the same time, a large militia and army were needed to defeat the new regime's opponents, who were being helped by a trigger-happy and highly incompetent Central Intelligence Agency. In 1966 the Cuban government, acting partly under the influence of the Chinese cultural revolution, also did away with small businesses, including street-vendors and tiny shops whose presence afforded the poor Cubans some slight relief but the statistics of whose activities were not easy to gather and whose operators seemed to the secret police certain to be anti-revolutionary — as indeed they were inclined to be. This made things worse. Frantically, Castro called on all hands to man the pumps, or rather the machete: the sugar harvest of 1970 would be the biggest ever — 10 million tons! The target was not reached.

After this the Russians seem largely to have taken over the management of the Cuban economy. All the evidence is that they had become involved in Cuba rather reluctantly at first, in 1959-60; Khrushchev is supposed to have hoped originally that Castro would become a Nasser, not a Kadar. But the Cubans had to sell to someone a quantity of sugar comparable to that which they had previously sold to the United States. The Russians were the only possible buyers despite their own high production of sugar. This imperative, combined with Castro's need of, and fascination with, weapons, cemented an alliance as improbable as any in the illogical history of communism. The Soviet Union began to give aid to Cuba in 1960, and was influencing the course of events in Havana as early as 1961. Cuban debts began to grow, and the impetuous Khrushchev strove to gain some military benefit from this economic commitment. By placing intermediate-range ballistic missiles and nuclear bombers in the island, he sought to increase his first-strike capacity against the United States. But he was outmanoeuvred by Kennedy in a part of the world where, whatever the independence of the CIA, the United States still had local control. His ensuing defeat led, it is now generally thought, to the Soviet decision to go ahead with the vast armaments programme that has since been under way in Russia.

Russia's economic and military aid to Cuba meant that Castro, and in the late 1960s, it would seem that Cuba began to operate as a kind of Comintern or Intelligence agency for the Soviet Union — not so much in Latin America (because of opposition from local communists) as in Africa. After the failure of the sugar harvest of 1970, the Soviet connection was emphasized further by the restructuring of the Cuban economy so as to reflect more exactly the Soviet system; while, it is said, the Cuban political police was also effectively purged by the Russians. Since Castro supported the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, there has been no public complaint about any act of Soviet foreign policy by any Cuban leader. Old members of the Communist Party of pre-1959 days — including Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, the vicar of Brav of Batista's cabinet (he had been a member of Batista's cabinet in the 1940s) — became more and more prominent in the decision-making in Havana, and the role of the military, always important, became still more marked.

A new stage started in the mid-1970s, when the Cuban regime began actively to intervene in Angola and elsewhere in Africa in division strength — rather than merely providing support for existing governments and guerrilla movements. With the discovery of off-shore oil in Mexico, and with indications of American self-doubt, the left wing guerrillas in Nicaragua and elsewhere in Central America now began to receive more systematic help. In 1979 Nicaragua became in effect Cuba's first Latin American satellite. At the same time, and less successfully, Cuba started to interest itself in Caribbean, with consequences speaking. The Cuban government took over not only the commanding heights of the economy but most of its small hilltops as well. The confusion was absolute, given that, understandably no

Public outrage at political and economic conditions in Cuba was astonishingly manifested last year when 10,000 Cubans took refuge in an embassy left temporarily unguarded — a propaganda defeat for communism no less striking than the construction of the Berlin wall. But as usual Castro managed to run rings round the American government by opening the gates of the island to whoever wished to leave, and allowing out a total of 120,000 Cubans, some of them criminals, in order to embarrass the Carter administration.

It is a touching feature of MacEwan's book that none of these facts is actually gained; he even hints at them himself. He tells us for example that "it would be naive to suppose that the economic relationship with the USSR has not affected Cuba's policy", and that "Cuba's lack of economic independence can hardly be seen as a positive aspect of its development strategy... the Soviet relation surely has its costs". MacEwan's resolute refusal to use statistics which even estimate the economic changes which have occurred in Cuba since 1975 make his book seem rather out of date. At times the reader may feel that MacEwan's Marxism, for all his publisher's commendation, is a fancy dress which begins to

fall to pieces as the ball proceeds: for example, his quotation from Castro himself that in his culture "the private sector's role will be indispensable for some time to come". But no one will gain any real knowledge of the genuine mismanagement, tedium, tragedy and frustration in modern Cuba from this book, nor any sense of why its leaders foster what Janec Stanic, a Yugoslav journalist, has recently described as "the Cubans' burning desire for a messianic role in the world" (in *Communism's Crossroads*).

Professor MacEwan is honest enough to admit the "lack of sufficient data" for his purpose in almost every field. His conclusion is: "... it is probably true that in any revolutionary process there is a time when the laws of action of the old society have been destroyed and the new modes of operation and organisation have not been firmly established, and during that time the explicit decisions of revolutionary actors are particularly important". In other words, if you have destroyed everything from the past and built nothing for the future, you can hang on to personal power indefinitely and even take your countrymen to fight in far-off countries of which they know nothing — particularly if you can get the Soviet Union to pay the bill.

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Strictly sensational

By Louis Allen

DENNIS KEENE:
Yokomitsu Ritschi Modernist
231pp. Columbia University Press. \$25.
0 231 04938 2

This is an interesting and infuriating book. Yokomitsu Ritschi (1898-1947) was a curious combination of literary experimenter and popular *feuilleton* novelist. As leader of the school of writing called Shin-kankaku-ha ("New-Sensation-School") he tried to import what was new in Europe into Japan: the aesthetic dilettantism of Gide, the disadful and correlative nihilism of Valéry, and the jazzy tricks of Dada and the surrealists. At the same time he kept his distance from the fashionable populist proletarian novel and the inextricable "I-novel" (*shi-shosetu*).

It is easy to treat him, therefore, not so much as an author in his own right, but as a bundle of ill-digested influences, an exemplary case of Japanese naïveté misled by European sophistication, finding himself only when he rejects this.

Dennis Keene's book, a re-worked doctoral thesis with the scholarly apparatus very sensibly removed, consists chiefly of an evaluation of the theory and practice of the Neo-Sensationalist Yokomitsu, followed by extended accounts of some of his novels and short stories, which in some cases exist in English already in Professor Keene's translation. The translations imply that Yokomitsu's fiction has some value for Keene, and at first this appears to be the case. The exposition is thorough, and the examples are generously provided so that the reader can make his own judgments. But Professor Keene is far too intrusive upon his material and his subject, in the way he treats it, cannot bear the weight of that intrusion.

Yokomitsu is different from the European models he used. His ideas are not of much interest, his novels are; whereas the theories of the Dadaists or the surrealists are fascinating but the actual works produced by them are not, or at least not often, and not very. So if one is to be fair to Yokomitsu, the stress should be on his little on the theories and far more on the fiction. Professor Keene is not fair to him in fact, he is consciously destructive of his subject. He is honest enough about why he knows perfectly well that there has been a kind of unreflexive snobbery about aspects of modern Japanese literature and that works have been praised when they don't deserve it, often for admirable but irrelevant reasons. So much space is taken up with the critic's own attitudes, with aesthetic conceptions about what it is to be a critic, and with the posturing of a commentator, that the poor author, meanwhile, is compelled to wait his turn in the wings.

It is easy enough to accuse Yokomitsu of futility, or of failing to relate theory and practice. The Neo-Sensationalist school is "a failure, something rootless and unproductive," with "no impact on society; it has no meaning except as a wrong road a few writers took, but only for a short time." What did it try to do? Simply to convey sensations directly to the reader, reducing authorial intervention to the minimum—a constant preoccupation of much "modernist" literature. The concrete results for Yokomitsu himself were a brief and brisk technique of dialogue, although that hardly seems an asset in the places translated here. As Keene resignedly puts it, this is *flaw* writing by a third-rate journalist.

Yokomitsu also consciously adopted a *haiku*-like form in his prose. This, according to Keene, was yet another error of understanding, because the "empty" form of the *haiku* is a means of approaching reality, whereas Yokomitsu's attempt at sensory effect, implying that reality is empty or lacks meaning. It is a still-life style and the movement of real life is beyond it. In the story "Glimpse, sky and people", Yokomitsu describes a journey to Korea:

"From an island country, to the continent. It once walks the streets, pears, pears, pears. Beneath the lights the continual pear trees are like a river bed. The white clothes flutter beneath the full yellow flowers. The footstep is superbly dogs [sic]."

"Ooooh! Ooooh! Everybody talks like cows."

I once had the following dream. A dream about hell. And yet in this hell people were selling pears.

Which serves, as Keene points out, "as a reminder of how bad this kind of literature can be".

But is that all there is to Yokomitsu? Take the novel *Shinen* (*Garden of Sleep*), published in 1931, "a real disappointment" for Keene. A rich girl Nanae loves Kaji, a young man she knew before she met her husband Niwa, who is an insensate bore, good in a neutral way, fond of hunting. Kaji is a type of modern intellectual. This is not a very new domestic triangle. In a hunting accident, when a wild bear rushes at Niwa, Nanae shoots, and Niwa falls. Had she intended to shoot him? The motivation could be far more complex. In Nanae's mind, just as she pulled the trigger, the image of Kaji flitted across her consciousness. Had she meant to shoot Kaji, then? The novelist Kawabata stressed that this shooting underlines the true aim of Yokomitsu's book: while Nanae consciously seeks Kaji she is unconsciously seeking her estranged husband. Keene, however, dismisses this; it is an interesting possibility, but that is not, he says, the book Yokomitsu wrote. So Nanae's analysis of her own motivation, at the moment of firing, which one Western critic has termed delicate and poignant, is dismissed by Professor Keene as perfunctory and commonplace.

Similarly, in an episode at the end of the book, Kaji meditates beside a river bank, and the image of a mausoleum—the "Garden of Sleep" of the title—occurs to him. Even Keene is constrained to describe the writing here as having reached a distinguished level:

Then suddenly something snapped in his mind and a sense of desolate emptiness began to rise and swell within him. As he squatted on the bank staring at one solitary, cold-looking stone peering up out of the water, a scene quite different from this before him drifted into his head, a Garden of Sleep seen while travelling in some foreign country. Then he remembered something seen before that, the thick scales of a marble, sculpted Chinese dragon by which it was said only one angel might ascend to heaven, and how he had cockily clambered across it; and all the splendid roostery dreams of that time came to him, and he compared it to what life was now and saw the useless emptiness of it all.

Here, says Keene, the symbol condemns the event to transcendence and nothingness; it rejects the real world instead of grasping it. Such a procedure has, Keene claims, no place in a psychological novel, since the insight is not into the real world but into "a value over and above it". It seems to me this is carrying parody to absurd lengths and would ultimately prevent any author attributing any kind of transcendental motivation to his characters at all.

So it goes on, chapter after chapter, the underlying theory dismissed as lame, the resulting works of the imagination as inept. What can be the explanation of Yokomitsu's reputation? How can both the Japanese and Western critics have treated some of his novels as masterpieces? Has he really anything of value to offer?

He has, but implicit in the reasons for Keene's study is why it cannot be shown. He has wanted to use Yokomitsu as a representative, not as an individual. And he has needed all the time to show the reader how he, the critic, remains undeluded. In his final words, Keene says he hopes he has gone beyond representative use of Yokomitsu "to show the writings, for all their defects, as of unique and true value, and the act of writing itself, as a genuine, even heroic one." The perception is gallant, but it bears little relation to what has gone before.

The first issue of *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, which Paul Smith refers to in his review on page 399 of this issue, has recently been published. The official journal of the International Association for Audio-Visual Media in Historical Research and Education it is concerned with historical and social scientists, and is published twice a year. In March and October. These two annual issues constitute one volume (£18. Single issues £9.50). Editorial correspondence, including manuscripts for submission and books for review, should be addressed to Dr K. R. M. Smith, Westminster College, North Hinkley, Oxford OX2 9AT. The first issue includes articles on "The Proletarian Cinema and the Weimar Republic" by David Welch, and "Hollywood's Message for the World: the British response in the nineteen thirties".



Dick Tracy (pictured on the left), according to his creator Chester Gould, was the first comic-strip hero to begin "fighting it out face to face with crooks via the hot lead route". Tracy first took to the streets of Chicago with his trench-coat and thrusting jaw on October 4, 1931. The cast of crooks he had to fight it out with includes such notable rogues as B-B Eyes, Flattop, Mumbles, The Brov and The Black Koko the Clown, pictured in the centre, was brought to animated life by the Austrian-born film cartoonist, Max Fleischer. The picture on the right is taken from *Milt Gross's Nice Baby* (1926). *Gross's* cartoon-strips include the famous Count Screwloose of Toonloose (famed in 1929) in which the Count, an inmate of the *Nureyev* lunatic asylum, repeatedly discovers that the world outside his institution is run crazier. Both illustrations, like that on page 398, come from *Surrealism and Its Popular Accomplishments*, edited by Franklin Rosemont (San Francisco: City Lights Books. \$4.95.) which surveys some of the sources and analogues of surrealist iconography in various forms of popular culture.



The snob from Pottsville

By Andrew Sinclair

FRANK MACSHANE:
The Life of John O'Hara
274pp. Cape. £10.
0 224 01885 X

"Never say someone has awful friends", the late Vice-Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, Jack Gallagher, once said: "You are always someone's awful friend." John O'Hara was the awful friend of most of the major American writers after the First World War. As Robert Benchley told him the morning after O'Hara had knocked his cigar out of his mouth in the Hollywood Mecca, the Garden of Allah: "You were born a shit just as some people were born with blue eyes, but that's no reason to go around apologizing for it. People take you for what you are."

O'Hara never took himself for what he was, but for someone better. Frank MacShane's new biography shows a man who revelled in playing the snobish and rough-neck caricature of his self-made role. Born in the small Pennsylvania mining town of Pottsville, O'Hara was the son of a dissembling Irish-American Catholic surgeon, not quite good enough for the local Protestant aristocracy who lived at the top of Mahanogon Street, but several cuts above the shanty Irish and Poles and Lithuanians who lived on the other side of the tracks that divided the two hills of the town. Violence was in the history of the place. Dozens of Molly Maguires had been hanged in Pottsville during their fight against the coal operators. One of their songs had a couplet about the area:

In short, if you want to enjoy God's bounty,
Go anywhere except to Schuylkill County.

O'Hara took the good advice. If the shortest way out of Pottsville was Pat Joyce's bar, which served liquor to fourteen-year-olds, the next way out was to become a journalist in New York. O'Hara always had one great gift: he could memorize names, freight-train numbers, genealogies, brands, old schools and fraternities, articles of dress and tricks of speech as if society were an extended Kim's Game of the artifice and dialects of social differences. This gift was the condition of his new career. From being a "vegetable man" on the *Herold Tribune* and *Time* magazine, he graduated to occasional pieces and short stories for *Rosa's New Yorker*.

Professor MacShane credits O'Hara with being the father of the modern *New Yorker* short story, but the claim is as inflated as O'Hara's own social pretensions. The *New Yorker* short story had many Southern mothers, not to mention Dorothy Parker, who was as good at drinking as O'Hara, but a more trenchant master of the psychological turning-point and the social gaffe or tragedy. O'Hara can be credited, more properly with being the father of the *Times* kind of tale: the modern American short-story novel, doomed to sink under the weight of its details, their brand-names, and the lists of attributes which make the place of origin of character. As Alfred

Kazin wrote of *From the Terrace*, "We are deluged, suffocated, drowned in facts, facts." After O'Hara, we still are.

Some of O'Hara's short stories were very good. They suited the bleak mood of the Depression years, as did his first and best novel, *Appointment in Samarra*. "Over the River and Through the Wood" and "Do You Like It Here?" are exact and appalling descriptions of inadvertent condemnation. In the first story, an old man mistakenly goes into the bathroom of a young girl. In the second, a boy is wrongly accused of stealing a watch. In both, society condemns them for what the victims did not do or mean to do. O'Hara's ground is particularly that no man's land of terror where one mistake becomes a life sentence.

Reading through an anthology even of his better stories, however, becomes more and more flat, stale and unprofitable. His themes are repetitive — boredom and despair and misunderstanding, wrapped in period detail. MacShane provides a reason for this in his biography. Until the final years of his life, O'Hara drank consistently and steadily to the point of boorishness and sickness. He appears to have suffered from what Jack London called in *John Barleycorn* "The White Logic" — the mental perception given by disgust after drinking too much. This state of mind was a world-weariness which believed that life was merely appearances and a perpetual telling of lies.

When O'Hara had to give up drink in order to keep alive, he became rich, his substituted lists of things and characteristics for the hopelessness and clarity of the White Logic; he thereby found himself popular again in the Eisenhower years of accumulation without motivation. But he was rewarded highly by his peers. MacShane is merciless in showing O'Hara's fawning after Hemingway and Scott Fitzgerald and Faulkner. He wanted a Nobel Prize, as Joe

DiMaggio wanted a sports honour, "so bad I can taste it". He never recovered from not being given an honorary degree by Yale. His imaginary Alma Mater — he kept a Yale Year Book of 1924 as though he had been in that Class.

His library reflected both his meticulousness and his vanities. On his shelves stood *Who's Who*, *Burke's Peerage*, *The Solid Register*, *Barlett's Quotations*, travel guides and gazettes, and the *Manual of the American College*. He knew who everyone was except himself. He had hardly read any of the major English or French or Russian novelists; he preferred a diet of magazines and five newspapers a day. He was the relentless eavesdropper in the restaurants, bars and clubs which he frequented. In one of his few moments of self-awareness, he said: "It is time that I made '21' a restaurant instead of a career."

Professor MacShane is to be congratulated for his persistent tracking down of the ruthless recorder himself. No unpleasant detail of O'Hara's life seems to have been omitted, from his habit of slugging women in public to his most notorious remark about himself: "My version of noblesse oblige is 'f--- you'." Whereas MacShane made Raymond Chandler intelligible, if unpalatable, in his previous biography, he portrays O'Hara as both repellent and unforgettable.

And yet, there was good writing there. As in the case of Jack London, O'Hara's plain, vernacular prose concealed a rare insight into human vulnerability and pain, but his talents were largely hidden beneath his cynicism. The epitaph written by the pen-pal H. L. Mencken on London could well apply to O'Hara: "The man, in truth, was an insensitive artist of a high order, and if ignorance often corrupted his art, it only made the fact of his inborn mastery the more remarkable."

Taken together

By Peter Kemp

ROBERT KIELY:
Beyond Egotism:
The Fiction of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and D. H. Lawrence
244pp. Harvard University Press. £8.40.
0 674 06896 3

Lawrence, Joyce and Woolf, says Robert Kiely, "felt radically obliged to put things together". So, it seems, does he; and in a quite excellent study of these authors, *Beyond Egotism*, he produces some very judicious criticism by a process of juxtaposition. Believing that "much can be learned from thinking about these writers in reference to one another", he goes on to vindicate his claim by looking—in an informed and, unfortunately, at their treatment of certain key themes: nature, mothers, marriage, friendship, drama.

The result is both enlightening and enjoyable. Professor Kiely moves with easy familiarity over an impressively wide field, and does so with a keen eye for detail. With outstanding perceptions, he explores most aspects of modernism; where appropriate, it takes in other topics too. There are, for instance, some crisp, astute comments on Jane Austen's grammar; "A bad grammar, like bad grammar, is always to be regretted, sometimes to be corrected, but never to be blamed on the institution itself. A good grammar, like a well-constructed sentence, is the consequence of foresight, discipline, and understanding." And Professor Kiely's observations have an admirable way of joining you into awareness of what could easily be missed: as when he notes, in English domestic fiction, that books with female protagonists usually include first and family name in the title, while those with male protagonists stop at the first, "a primary assumption of the form that the last name would change".

In poetic profusion

By Joseph Rykwert

UMBERTO DI CRISTINA:
La dimora di D'Annunzio: Il Vittoriale
Photographs by Christopher Broadbent
189pp. Edizioni Novecento, Piazza Castelnuovo 35, 90141 Palermo.

On March 1, 1938, Gabriele D'Annunzio felt ill while in the "Officina", or "workshop" of his villa at Gardone. At its very low door even he, tiny as he was, had to lower his head to pass, on his way down to the "Zanabracca" (the den or shack—all the rooms in his house had such nicknames), which was lined in green damask. There he took some medicine from his vast home pharmacy, sat at the desk and looked across at the British Museum plaster-cast of the sun's horses from the Parthenon. And there too, an embolism struck him dead.

The poet's body was laid out in the "room of pure dreams", also known as the "leper's room", on the catafalque-bed on which he used to contemplate his guilty life, dressed in a Franciscan habit; beside the bed, a life-size polychrome wooden statue of Saint Sebastian, his wounds bleeding. Beside the bed, too, the photographs of the three women he had "truly loved": his mother and sister, and the great Eleonora Duse. Other "furnishings" included an unexploded bomb wreathed in bay-leaves and a casket of earth from his native Abruzzo. Over the bed was a painting showing him as the leper being embraced by St Francis.

D'Annunzio was seventy-five when he died, the days of his fame and lionizing were long over. The last great episode of his life which had earned him the title of *Comandante* among his faithful followers, the annexation of Fiume, had been aggressively disowned by Giolitti, the socialist prime minister of the time. And D'Annunzio's political stance, that of the nationalist and populist right-winger, had been purloined and (or so he felt) cheapened by Mussolini.

After the great action which Fiume had promised to be, and his brief taste of power there, he withdrew, disenchanted, deflated and tired, to the Vittoriale, three or four miles up lake Garda from Salò (which was to play so shameful a part in more recent Italian history). The old house had been re-built and adapted for Heinrich Thode, an art-historian and professor at Heidelberg, who had married Santa von Bülow and could therefore be considered Richard Wagner's son-out-of-law. It housed a library of 6,000 books, and other goods and chattels — including the Steinway which D'Annunzio had heard Liszt play many years earlier at Tirol.

D'Annunzio found the villa cold, and Germanic; it had been confiscated at the outbreak of war. By 1920, the Thodes were

divorced and the moment D'Annunzio took it on, he started working on it. He soon found a local architect of no great distinction but great good-will who became his factotum. Much work in the house was done by D'Annunzio's otherwise unmemorable court-painter Giulio Cadorna. And D'Annunzio, not only *Comandante* but by now also "Prince of the Snow Mountain" (de Montenevoso), lived out what he imagined to be a princely life; which compensated him in some measure for the consciousness of his declining literary powers. In this the house and its extraordinary accumulation of objects played the dominant part: the bric-a-brac was piled up mercilessly. And not only inside the house: a plane which had flown from Italy to Australia. But truly fanciful car features were the things he most prized in the scenery of the real world: a limestone terrain, overshot water-wheels, narrow gauge tramways and lead mines. Other people develop imaginary railways, systems, or networks of fictitious canals.

The construction of such imaginary landscapes is almost inseparable from literary creation. Even if no conscious invention takes place, fiction transforms the real into the partly mythical. Joyce's Dublin is an obvious example, while the London streets of *Mrs Dalloway* and even of Jane Austen's Bath are in a sense "invented" places—more so, indeed, than certain actual inventions, such as the island of *The Lord of the Flies*, which is a functional landscape, a device to trigger off the story. An extreme example of a real place becoming a myth, almost without the writer willing it to, is "Charles City" in the poetry and prose of Charles Williams; ostensibly the City of London, where Williams spent most of his working life, it dissolves by imperceptible stages into Byzantium, and then again into something which is pure symbol.

Obviously anyone who compiles a *Dictionary of Imaginary Places* is taking on a lot; virtually the whole of literature, in fact. And what can be the purpose of such an enterprise? In practical terms, the most likely users are crossword enthusiasts, quizmasters and compilers of literary encyclopedias. Obviously, though, there will be a more subtle aim than the mere providing of bare information. The dictionary itself should be a work of the imagination, accurate in its marshalling of facts about the places it describes, but also able to convey the subtleties not just of the terrain but of the spirit in which it was mapped out by its creator.

At first sight, Alberto Manguel and Gianni Guadalupi seem to have produced rather a clinical volume. (Who exactly these authors are and where they come from remains a mystery; perhaps they, too, are imaginary.) Its 440 large-format pages, with three narrow columns of type, depress the imagination rather than excite it, and there is not a splash of colour from one end of the book to the other. Apart from a handful of greyish text-illustrations depicting buildings and artefacts relating to selected entries, the chief visual feature is the map. And how dreary these are. To map Carroll's Wonderland at all is to misunderstand its non-sensational physical nature; this, after all, is a country where signposts may point in any direction that they choose; a map of it, if drawn at all, should resemble the Bellman's chart in *The Hunting of the Snark*. "A perfect and absolute blank". Besides, the Wonderland map in the *Dictionary* makes the place look like a model-railway layout.

Nor does the foreword greatly encourage. Wessex and Barchester, Messrs Manguel and Guadalupi tell us, are excluded from the *Dictionary* because "they are in effect disguises, or pseudonyms, for existing locales". Are they really? And if this is sufficient reason for exclusion, why is Liarsburg given an entry? Surely something has gone wrong with policy if Wonderland is left out simply on the grounds that it appears on real maps? The book is full of such details. Recipes for dishes coloured with saffron, mulberry or sage juices, made from odd parts of odd plants and animals and described with workmanlike zest, make particularly invigorating reading. If you haven't got a still and squawkily let the butcher slaughter your oxen: if your commoner's purse can't stretch to *The Country Housewife*, so that you have to forgo outsmarting your friends with Ummie Pyle, roast badger and Viper Soup, here's one invaluable piece of advice for the brawn at the next dinner party: "chuse an old Boar".

Richard Bradley, who was the first Professor of Botany at Cambridge, excoriated meat-eating kitchen-maids from the traditional charge that they were the cause of sickness: "sciences is ousting super-naturalism". But folklore is evergreen: if the Cumberland Christmas Hackin is not ready by daybreak, he records, the maid is run through the town between two men. Despite this kind of thing, and despite the male protagonists usually include first and family name in the title, while those with female protagonists stop at the first, "a primary assumption of the form that the last name would change".

Out of this world

By Humphrey Carpenter

ALBERTO MANGUEL AND GIANNI GUADALUPI:
A Dictionary of Imaginary Places
438pp. Granada. £12.50.
0 246 11560 2

Most people have their private countries of the mind, composed of fragments of memory—often from childhood—of half-remembered bits of books, and secret fears and desires. A few build up such landscapes more consciously, more methodically. Much of W. H. Auden's childhood and adolescence was spent poring over a mental map of the real world: a limestone terrain, overshot water-wheels, narrow gauge tramways and lead mines. Other people develop imaginary railways, systems, or networks of fictitious canals.

The construction of such imaginary landscapes is almost inseparable from literary creation. Even if no conscious invention takes place, fiction transforms the real into the partly mythical. Joyce's Dublin is an obvious example, while the London streets of *Mrs Dalloway* and even of Jane Austen's Bath are in a sense "invented" places—more so, indeed, than certain actual inventions, such as the island of *The Lord of the Flies*, which is a functional landscape, a device to trigger off the story. An extreme example of a real place becoming a myth, almost without the writer willing it to, is "Charles City" in the poetry and prose of Charles Williams; ostensibly the City of London, where Williams spent most of his working life, it dissolves by imperceptible stages into Byzantium, and then again into something which is pure symbol.

Obviously anyone who compiles a *Dictionary of Imaginary Places* is taking on a lot; virtually the whole of literature, in fact. And what can be the purpose of such an enterprise? In practical terms, the most likely users are crossword enthusiasts, quizmasters and compilers of literary encyclopedias. Obviously, though, there will be a more subtle aim than the mere providing of bare information. The dictionary itself should be a work of the imagination, accurate in its marshalling of facts about the places it describes, but also able to convey the subtleties not just of the terrain but of the spirit in which it was mapped out by its creator.

At first sight, Alberto Manguel and Gianni Guadalupi seem to have produced rather a clinical volume. (Who exactly these authors are and where they come from remains a mystery; perhaps they, too, are imaginary.) Its 440 large-format pages, with three narrow columns of type, depress the imagination rather than excite it, and there is not a splash of colour from one end of the book to the other. Apart from a handful of greyish text-illustrations depicting buildings and artefacts relating to selected entries, the chief visual feature is the map. And how dreary these are. To map Carroll's Wonderland at all is to misunderstand its non-sensational physical nature; this, after all, is a country where signposts may point in any direction that they choose; a map of it, if drawn at all, should resemble the Bellman's chart in *The Hunting of the Snark*. "A perfect and absolute blank". Besides, the Wonderland map in the *Dictionary* makes the place look like a model-railway layout.

Nor does the foreword greatly encourage. Wessex and Barchester, Messrs Manguel and Guadalupi tell us, are excluded from the *Dictionary* because "they are in effect disguises, or pseudonyms, for existing locales". Are they really? And if this is sufficient reason for exclusion, why is Liarsburg given an entry? Surely something has gone wrong with policy if Wonderland is left out simply on the grounds that it appears on real maps? The book is full of such details. Recipes for dishes coloured with saffron, mulberry or sage juices, made from odd parts of odd plants and animals and described with workmanlike zest, make particularly invigorating reading. If you haven't got a still and squawkily let the butcher slaughter your oxen: if your commoner's purse can't stretch to *The Country Housewife*, so that you have to forgo outsmarting your friends with Ummie Pyle, roast badger and Viper Soup, here's one invaluable piece of advice for the brawn at the next dinner party: "chuse an old Boar".

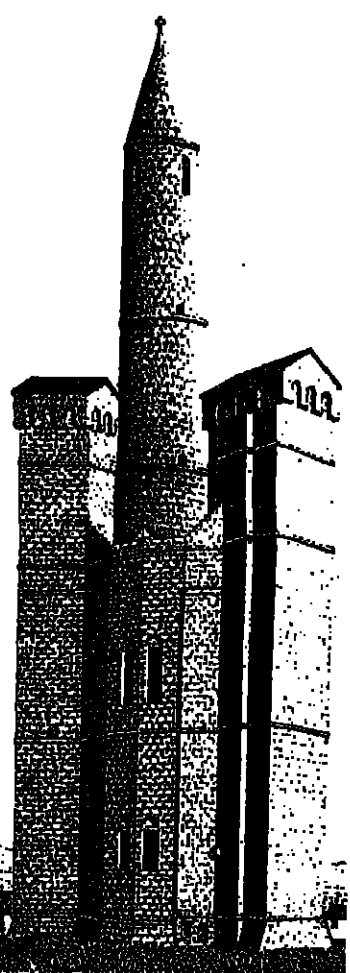
The "jumbles could go on; inevitably with such an enterprise. And on the other side, there is a great deal to excite and delight in the book. As with all the best works of reference, one starts to look up something and is constantly sidetracked by intriguing entries.

Silicide City, situated at a great depth

beneath the Forest of Vincennes, east of Paris, and discovered during construction of the new underground line between the stations of Bastille and Vincennes. The city was discovered by Inspector Sauvage of the Paris police when searching for a number of workers who had disappeared during the excavations. . . . The inhabitants of this city . . . are those fortunate (or unfortunate) few who have escaped a suicide attempt . . .

Atlantic Tunnel, an underwater railway tunnel some 4,700 kilometres long that used to join Europe and America . . . The building of the tunnel started in 1924 . . . On the day of the inauguration . . . during the passage of the first underwater train, an explosion shook the tunnel and destroyed most of [it]. The train remained trapped under water, but the passengers managed to save themselves by putting on divers' helmets and walking back to Europe. On the way home, they had the good fortune of discovering Atlantis, one of the lost cities founded by the people of Atlantis . . .

Monsters' Park, a kind of Disneyland, built on the beach of Alexandria in



This Tower of the Kings is on Havnar, a large island to the north of the Inmost Sea of Earthsea. The illustration is taken from the book reviewed here.

Egypt, of which today only the ruins remain. It consists of a series of enormous statues of sea-monsters, too horrible to describe, set along the coast to protect the city . . .

These three are the creations, respectively, of José Muñoz Escanero, Luigi Montu, and Maria Savi-Lopez, of whom I have never heard but would, on the evidence of these entries, like to know more—exactly the effect that the *Dictionary* should have on its readers. That kind of entry (reflecting the authors' huge range of reading) seems to me far more welcome than the endless articles about places in Tolkien's Middle-earth which clutter up the book; there are, as far as I can calculate, more than a hundred of these, and they are not likely to make many converts to *The Lord of the Rings*, since they quite unfairly make it seem like a mere store of place-names. Predictably, Ursula Le Guin and Lloyd Alexander, followers in Tolkien's footsteps, feature prominently, too, and make a pretty poor showing. Or, rather, the Manguel-Guadalupi touch makes them sound much duller than they probably are:

Wathori [from Ursula Le Guin's *Ward of Earthsea*]: a large island on the southern coast of the Inmost Sea of Earthsea. Hori, on the northern

coast, is one of the major ports of the archipelago and an important centre for trade throughout the entire South Reach. Here the great galleys of the Inland Sea can be seen side by side with the ships that ply the southern waters of Earthsea . . .

That's the sort of stuff that makes an Edwardian *Baedeker* seem magical in its style.

Next to *Wathori*, my eye is suddenly caught by *Wasserpierland*, which I had entirely forgotten from childhood readings of Kingsley's *Water Babies*:

A land of uncertain location, where all the stupid books ever produced lie in heaps, like leaves in a winter wood. The people of the country dig and grub around in the piles to make worse books out of bad ones and trash the chalk so that they can save the dust which they then sell. They make a fairly good living at their trade, particularly those who specialize in children's books and modern romantic fiction.

Satirical inventions like this come over much better than do less purposeful "sub-creations", to use Tolkien's term for the freethought construction of imaginary places and peoples. Gormenghast Castle, one of the most brilliantly conceived of all invented places in fiction, seems boring when encapsulated in seven and a half columns of the *Dictionary's* cold print. (Too many of the articles are far too long.) By contrast, another castle immediately intrigues with its half-column entry: it is Kafka's Schloss.

If satire has produced the most sharply-conceived imaginary places, the other end of the scale is surely occupied by the "Robinsonade", or imitation of Defoe. Crusoe's island itself would scarcely be memorable were it not for its inhabitant, while *Wiss's Swiss Family Robinson* really topped bottom, as even Manguel and Guadalupi, usually loyal to their authors, admit: "The family . . . called [the island] New Switzerland, making the colony an example of propriety, strict morals, hard work and studious dullness."

For sheer physical invention, of course, there is little to rival Verne, Haggard and the "Challenger" stories of Conan Doyle, all three of whom had the fortune to operate before the deadening labels of Fantasy and Science Fiction were devised. Judging by this entry, Challenger's adventures certainly bear revisiting:

Challenger Field, at Hengist Down, Sussex, England, where Professor G. E. Challenger . . . accomplished his amazing experiment . . . The traveller will see the remains of a shaft through which Professor Challenger injured the planet Earth—which, as everyone knows since this experiment, is a live animal, somewhat like a sea urchin. The most horrible yell ever heard echoed along the whole South Coast and even reached France . . .

Plenty of fun, then, in this odd topographical enterprise. Inevitably, one's quibbles go on and on: why is *Earthsea* Tascargia there but not Valmout? Why the Green Chapel but not Grendel's mere? Why Camelot but not Logres? But such blemishes are inevitable, and in the end minor.

Two final warnings. If you desire to discover great general truths about the human imagination, you will have to work them out for yourself, for the compilers make no attempt to link the parts into a whole, beyond an occasional half-hearted observation that one invented place resembles some aspect of another. And if you do not like whimsy, this is not the book for you; the constant pretence that everything described is real can become wearisome—and can lead to some startling statements:

Looking-Glass Land, a country beyond the Deansery of Christ Church College, Oxford. Travellers can reach it by entering the Dean's quarters and proceeding to his sitting room, with its large chimney-piece surmounted by a looking-glass of vast proportions. Carefully avoiding the vases of dried flowers protected by Victoria bell-jars, visitors should climb up onto the mantelpiece and enter Looking-Glass Land through the glass, which will melt away like a bright silvery mist.

One only hopes that the present Dean has been warned to expect callers.

commentary

Watching them bounce

By Janet Morgan

Sophisticated Ladies
Lunt-Fontanne Theatre, New York

Who is responsible for this — and, in any case, what exactly is it? The concept? was, well, conceived by Donald McKayle; Henry LeTang saw to the "co-choreography and tap choreography"; Donald McKayle (again) and Michael Smuin dealt with the "musical staging and choreography". But half a dozen other people apparently fixed up "orchestrations", "musical and dance arrangements", "vocal arrangements" and "additional arrangements" respectively, while among the list of designers with which the programme bristles is Opps Mundeloh, who is given credit for the sound. Perhaps this has less to do with a national obsession with separation of powers than with the almost statutory requirement, ever since *A Chorus Line*, to give everyone a credit where it is most obscurely due.

The "concept" itself is based on music by Duke Ellington, thirty-seven much-loved songs mostly written in the 1920s and 40s and now directed by Mercer Ellington who, "since the Duke passed on in 1974" (the programme provides the only delicate note in the show), has assumed his father's mantle. Some of the orchestra's virtuosity seems to have passed on at the same time. Best is a bass sax in specs who manages to produce several autonomous flourishes. But what the audience gets is noise — a very great deal of it — rather than music: overpowering waves of amplified sound hurled at a hypnotized and enraptured crowd. (Admittedly, a similar fragmentation of responsibility between Box Office, Press Agent and Ticket Agent placed me in the third row.)

So what happens? Dancers sing, singers dance, in an extraordinarily various costumes and equipped with suggestive props. This frenzy of activity occurs against the background of the band, piled up in a sort of zigzag whose steps are occasionally illuminated so that they resemble the notes in a piano, although paradoxically whenever this takes place the pianist falls silent. From time to time neon signs — "The Cotton Club", "Cafe Society", "Le Jazz Hot", "So forth" — descend from the roof. "Hi Me With a Hot Note and Watch Me Bounce" (1945) produces Terri Kulser (a woman) in a blue lured skirt, walking under pink fluorescent lights; "The Moochie" (1929) gives us a squad of jungle dancers with heavy gold snake anklets, scanty suits in camouflage pattern and, over their breasts, brass helmets with sliding nipples. Intriguingly engineered, together with a lissom fellow in a yellow tiger outfit with lascivious tail, who capers athletically while chewing a banana, or maybe a cigar. "Caravan"

(1937) is excellent: the eight members of the ensemble in aviators' suits of white and mauve satin, with goggles, lowering their heads and spinning their arms like a film of the Battle of Britain. Perfumed smoke drifts over the audience while a pilot in silver and pale blue zooms in and out, twirling not a cane but a joystick cum propeller.

The solo dancer here is Gregg Burge (formerly of *Bojangles: Evolution of the Blues*); he and Hinton Battle, another young black male dancer, make a wonderfully lithe, witty and inventive pair. These two perform one of the gentler and — most welcome — hushed pieces, "Dancers in Love" (1945), quietly pirouetting with Mercedes Ellington (no relation), a sinuous, indeed rubbery, partner. "Imagine My Frustration" (1966) brings a glorious wall-flower, Terri Klausner again, in a pink and green gown reminiscent of Worth and an orchid in her hair, trying to join in a punk party, dancing with awful incompetence and tripping up her neighbours.

The two stars, Gregory Hines and Judith Jamison, both very tall and versatile black dancers and singers, offer ever-accelerating tap dancing, energetic percussion, generously clever, rather ironic, acting and parody. The extremely graceful Miss Jamison ("it was not until she was a psychology major at Fisk University that she realized that dance would be her real career . . .") dances as one would expect of a member of the Alvin Ailey Company, with a great deal of Isadorish stretching and drifting, most pointlessly in "Solitude" (1934) where she is obliged to move about forlornly in a violet satin nightdress while Priscilla Baskerville, "a spinto soprano", ecstatically sings in the night.

A bit tacky, then, but effective. Some special connection ties together audience and cast. Perhaps it is the familiarity of the music, perhaps the relentless pace and constant transformations of scene which demand everyone's fearful concentration. In fact, the whole thing is entertaining and absolutely exhausting. By the time — only three-quarters of the way through — that Gregory Hines ("I'm Just a Lucky So-and-So", 1945) appeared, boistered, in an ingenious human taxi, I longed to take a cab myself. But this reaction was shared by only a few amazed foreigners and bewildered children; the bulk of the audience could have stayed for hours, and called frantically for more to the very end, when the Sophisticated Lady (1953) enacted in a blue lured skirt, walking under pink fluorescent lights, with her spangles, with her supercilious sisters (not knowing that we had observed the dams in their sequined fish-net tights), stalked, blinking back a tear, into the arms of the magisterial chaperone waiting grimly in the wings. (For such glimpses of reality are among the third row's privileges.)

Tramshed blues

By Holly Eley

Camden Jazz Festival
Round House, Chalk Farm

The acoustically adequate, though vast and impersonal, Round House recently staged six performances on consecutive nights by some jazz masters. The atmosphere was seldom electric, the audience seldom moved. It could be that the British, who appreciate jazz intellectually, have little feeling for it; but the draughtily ex-tramshed resembles Carnegie Hall more than Birdland. Even Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald in concert at the Carnegie Hall have found it hard to galvanize and draw inspiration from their audience.

The wealth of Camden Jazz Festival promised well. But the most eagerly anticipated band — the ageing white "West Coast" big band, Chet Baker and his quintet, as well as the experimental George Adams Don Pullen Quintet, which enveloped the stily, festival, played "complaint", emotionally empty music and were rewarded with polite applause. The virtuoso Ben Cortis (equally at home with a symphony orchestra and with his own "cool" quartet) wrapped himself round his piccolo bass like an overgrown Harlequin. Chet Baker, his ill-fated, this programme, hit simplified the style.

By the middle of the week the sixty-two year old drummer Art Blakey and his ever younger, ever more collegiate Jazz Messengers brought the audience to their feet and almost kept them there. His easy confident rap (he calls himself "Mama Blakey's bemblo predilecto; Arturo") briefly transcending the cavernous surroundings and British phlegm. Abdullah Ibrahim (previously Dollar Brand) and his African Group also attracted attention. The tensely disciplined South African percussive pianist carried the audience on a series of folk rhythms dedicated to Soweto and other South African townships. Though he has recorded with experimental New York musicians in recent years — in particular with Don Cherry and Gato Barbieri on the stark *Confluence* album — the only complex set at the Round House was his hunting "Homage to Coltrane". In it, Bob Cunningham's bawdy, bawling rendition of "Giant Steps", the bawdy straight into a ritualistic celebration, built up. Andro Stokich's primitive pounding percussion and highlighted by the inextricable, clear, space tones of Carlos Ward's tenor saxophone. For once, audience response was wholehearted.

Polanski's film *Taxi*, which opened this week in London, was reviewed in *Commentary* of September 12, 1980, during its run at the Edinburgh Festival.

Slight spinach shortage in Sweethaven

By Nick Roddick

Popeye
Various cinemas

Robert Altman and Walt Disney Productions make an unlikely combination. Intellectuals, of course, have always been nuts about comic books: Alain Resnais reputedly has one of the world's largest collections, while the screenplay for *Popeye* is by none other than Jules Feiffer. All the same, the Altman/Disney combination sounds like the winning entry in a weekly competition. It would be nice to say it was a triumphant matching; unfortunately, *Popeye* is an amiable mess; full of nice things and fairly consistently entertaining, but a mess all the same.

In the first place, Feiffer's screenplay is not all that funny. Perhaps it wasn't meant to be: maybe the idea was just to do a live-action version of one of the very few classic animated series not to star a small furry animal. But the occasional adult-oriented jokes that do surface suggest otherwise. The best come as throwaway Popeyeisms during his visit to the dingy horse-race parlour, a "house of ill-repute" where one is liable to catch "venerable disease". There may be enough, but few of them emerge audibly enough from Robin Williams's perpetual garbled mutter — a not particularly exact equivalent of the cartoon character's voice which becomes tiresome after a while. The high spot of the spoken script comes, for me, during Bluto's courting visit to the Oyl household. Determined that Olive loves him, he pulls the petals from a handy flower until it becomes clear to the terrified observers that the final petal is going to be "She loves me not". "Defective flower, Captain Bluto!", asks Olive's brother hopefully.

The movie doesn't have much plot: Popeye arrives in Sweethaven and becomes a hero for throwing out the tax collector; he woo's Olive and wins the enmity of the villainous Bluto; Popeye and Olive acquire the orphan Swee'Pea; Bluto kidnaps Olive and Swee'Pea; Popeye rescues them. Perhaps my object to the fact that the Feiffer/Altman Popeye hates spinach and only resorts to it in desperation during the final battle. In the first two

lights, spinachless, Popeye flatters everyone but Bluto. Bluto drills him into the floor like a gimlet. In the third, he defeats Bluto and a giant octopus. The fights are the best things in *Popeye*, involving an ingenious combination of acrobatics, special effects and slapstick. They are also what Williams does best, leaping around like a slightly malfunctioning jack-in-the-box with huge prosthetic forearms that look more convincing than they might have done but not as good as they should.

Looking not quite as good as it should is, in fact, the main problem with the movie. Except from the shortcoming are Wolf Kroeger's magnificent Sweethaven set, the two-year-old Wesley Ivan Hurt as Swee'Pea and Shelley Duval's gangling, squawky Olive Oyl (initially more likeable than her animated ancestor). But for once Altman's fondness for collecting a lot of characters on a composite set and watching them get on with it seems to have let him down. The inhabitants of Sweethaven, all distinguished by some oddity of physique,

Comedy of errors

Andrew Hislop

Star Crazy
Various cinemas

With the old variety of prejudice in the movies, black guys were simple and happy and did not get the girl. Richard Pryor in Sidney Poitier's *Star Crazy* is not simple or happy but still does not get the girl. Gene Wilder, who despite (or because of) literary ambitions, is benignly naive, wins her heart. Pryor does not even get the girl, black prisoner who fancies him (not that he wants him, even when he dresses as a woman). Still, the prisoner in the skirt is almost the nearest thing in the film to a soul sister, since the director tired of doubt of endless playing the white liberal version of a black man with no untoward feelings for white flesh in his heart or hands, gives us a voyeuristic sequence of white strippers but no black women (apart from a brief appearance of a cook and a maid).

Star Crazy has made many people laugh (it is a huge success in America) but the

script by Bruce Jay Friedman, though it times very funny, does not have the control of the best comic films; and the director is clumsily paced, finishing some scenes too early and allowing others to run on too long. In Pryor, though, it has one of the most gifted comics, who has only to hint at the wealth of his mimical repertoire, like when he wipes off the traces of an unacknowledged convict, to cause laughter.

Pryor plays an actor who is sacked from a job as a butler when his cache of grass is mistaken by the cook for origami. Gene Wilder is a failed playwright who is fired from being a store detective after making improper suggestions to an actress. Together they head for Hollywood, but end up sentenced to 125 years in the Arizona State penitentiary when they are mistaken for bank-robbers. The governor is obsessed with winning the annual rodeo contest with another prison and Wilder proves, unexpectedly, to have a save scene as an urban cowboy on mechanical and mechanical steers. The two mummies make their escape to the contest, and the loneliness of the long slitting rodeo rider ends just before the laughs run out.

Among this week's contributors

LOUIS ALLEN is a lecturer in French at the University of Durham.

CHARLES BOYLE's collection of poems *Affinites* was published in 1977.

J. S. BRATTON is the author of *Willon's Music Hall*, 1980.

LORD BRUGES is Provost of Worcester College, Oxford. His books include *Victorian Cities* 1963.

ANITA BROOKNER's most recent book is her biography of Jacques Louis David, 1980.

BARBUD BROPHY's books include *Beardsley and His World*, 1976, and *Palace Without Chairs*, 1978.

RICHARD BROWN is co-editor of *The James Joyce Broadsheet*.

JOHN BUXTON's books include *Byron and Shelley: The History of a Friendship*, 1968, and *Note on the Garden at New College*, 1976.

HUMPHREY CARPENTER's biography of W. H. Auden will be published later this year.

PETER J. CONRAD teaches English at the South Bank Polytechnic, London.

PATRICIA CRAIG's critical study, *The Lady Investigates: Women Detectives and Spies in Fiction*, a collaboration with Mary Cudgen, was published earlier this year.

TOM DISCH's novel *On Wings of Song*, was published in 1979. His new collection of poems *ABCDEFGHIJKLMNPOQRSTUVWXYZ* will be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

AUSTIN ELLIOT's parallel-text translations of Verlaine's *Femmes* and *Homages* and Heine's *Lazarus Poems* were published in 1979. His parallel-text edition of Virgil and Dryden's *Georgics* will be published, shortly.

D. J. ENRIGHT's recent collections of poems include *A Fast Book*, 1978. He is editor of *The Oxford Book of Contemporary Verse* 1945-80.

P. R. FAWCETT is a lecturer in French at the University of Leicester.

KATE FLINT is a lecturer in English at the University of Bristol.

W. H. C. FRENCH is Professor of Ecclesiastical History at the University of Glasgow. His books include *Town and Country in the Early Christian Centuries*, 1980.

ALAN FORREST is the author of *Society and Politics in Revolutionary Bordeaux*, 1975.

MARGARET GARDINER is the founder of the Pier Arts Centre at Stromness, Orkney.

MICHAEL HAMBURGER's new edition of translations of *Poems and Fragments* by Friedrich Hölderlin was published last year.

HUGH HAUGHTON is a lecturer in English at the University of York.

ROBERT HEWSON's *In Anger: Culture in the Cold War 1945-1980*, was published last month.

CHRISTOPHER HOPE's novel *A Separate Development* was published in South Africa last July and almost immediately banned.

SIR DAVID HUNT's books include *A Don at War*, 1966, and *On the Spot*, 1975.

BARBARA JONES is Professor of Geography at the University of London.

HENRY KAMIN's most recent book is *Spain the later Seventeenth Century 1665-1700*, 1981.

ALEX KEYSER's *Out of Work: A Social History of Unemployment in the United States* will be published shortly by Cambridge University Press.

WALTER LAQUEUR's books include *Wehrmacht: A Cultural History 1918-33*, 1974, and *Terrorism*, 1977.

ROBERT BERNARD MARTIN's *Tempest: the Unquiet Heart* was recently awarded the Duff Cooper Memorial Prize.

PRISCILLA METCALF's books include *James Knowles: Victorian Editor and Architect*, 1980.

D. M. PALLISER is the author of *Tudor York*, 1980.

ALEX PUTTS is a lecturer in the History of Art at the University of East Anglia.

NICK RODDICK is a lecturer in Drama at the University of Manchester.

JOSEPH RYKWERF's most recent book is *The First Moderns: The Architects of the Eighteenth Century*, 1980.

ANDREW SINCLAIR's books include *Jack: the biography of Jack London*, 1977.

PAUL SMITH is Professor of Modern History at the University of Southampton.

KIM TAPLIN is the author of *The English Path*, 1979.

HUGH THOMAS is Chairman of the Centre for Policy Studies. His books include *Cuba or the Pursuit of Freedom*, 1971 and *The Cuban Revolution*, 1977.

E. A. THOMPSON's books include *The Goths in Spain*, 1969.

PETER THOMSON is Keeper of the Department of Furniture and Woodwork at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

J. Z. THROW is the author of *Winchester: A Study in Medieval Agricultural Productivity*, 1972.

E. S. TURNER's most recent book is *Don Old Blighy*, 1980.

TIMOTHY WEBB's *English Romantic Hell: 1700-1824* will be published by Manchester University Press later this year.

C. M. WOODHOUSE's books include *The New Concert of Nations*, 1964, and *The Struggle for Greece 1941-49*, 1976.

English Revolutions

Sir, — J.P. Kenyon's comments about my contributions to two recent essay collections (March 6) are a mixture of inaccuracy on matters of fact and prejudice on matters of opinion. Referring to my "The Results of the English Revolutions of the Seventeenth Century", he observes that "The first half is largely a re-hash of his own *Causas*". By the most generous calculations, I cannot be shown to have spent more than five pages out of 100 on events before 1642. His other remarks are made from the vantage-point of the High Tory horse upon which he rides to war these days. He cannot admit to the influence of Nonconformists in London in the 1790s, since it would ruin his case, and he neglects to mention that I severely criticize his wholly unsubstantiated claim that "under Queen Anne, as under Charles II, there is no doubt that the most influential political theorist was Sir Robert Filmer". His assertions about the irrelevance of contract theory to the participants in the events of 1688 are about to be demolished in the *Historical Journal*. Readers of the TLS should know that there is still plenty of life left in the Whig interpretation of seventeenth-century England.

As for his comments on my other paper on urban buildings in late seventeenth-century London, readers can judge for themselves whether "there is nothing in it which could not have been gleaned from other books". I have often been accused of error (sometimes rightly) but never before of banality. It must be a new vice.

LAWRENCE STONE.

Department of History, 129 Dickinson Hall, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey 08544.

Gout

Sir, — In his entertaining survey of gout (March 20), Pat Rogers touches upon the strange, unsuccessful remedies suggested by quacks and physicians alike. From the seventeenth century, however, comes firm testimony to the efficacy of one cure. Sir William Temple succumbed to gout in 1676, during his second period at the Hague. Despairing of conventional treatments (sweating, purging, poultices and plasters), he submitted to the exotic cure by moxa, "a certain kind of moss that grew in the East-Indies". A cone of the moss, placed on the painful spot in Temple's right foot, was ignited by a perfumed match, "made likewise in the Indies". This cone burnt down to its base, as did second and third cones of moxa. They discoloured the skin, but progressively eased the gout. The damaged skin had next to be treated with "a bruised clove of garlic" and a plaster of diaphanes. A day later, following the lancing of a blister, Temple judged himself on the path to total recovery.

At first he resisted pleas from Gresham College to make his experience more widely known, on the grounds that further trials were necessary; by 1680, however, Temple's confidence in the cure was such that he felt able to publish an account of it in *Miscellanea*. The essay refers to some equally unconventional treatments, including one followed earlier by Maurice of Nassau, who immersed his leg in the boiling dung of white stallions. Temple's standpoint is that prevention of gout should spring naturally from temperate living. The upsurge in the affliction which marked the post-Restoration wine as a common beverage. "For this use may be more pernicious to health, than that of Taverns and Debauches according to the old style, which were but fits, and upon set or casual encounters." Wine, he concludes, ought to be reserved for feasts and occasions of joy, and treated like a mistress rather than a wife.

TERENCE LUCAS.

Publicity Director, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.

Ellet's Clark Lectures

Sir, — A.D. Moody is right to point out the tale claim made in the RKP advertisement of February 25. The offending line should have read "is the first book to make extensive use of Ellet's unpublished Clark Lectures on metaphysical poetry". Apologies to Mr Moody and to Dr Edward Lobb, the author, who will certainly be dismayed to find that he has been misquoted.

JOHN HARRIS.

Department of Bibliographical Studies, College of Librarianship Wales, Aberystwyth.

Vampires

Sir, — In the bizarre conclusion to his review of James Twitchell's *The Living Dead* (March 20), A.N. Wilson asserts that "no writer has ever written more brilliantly about vampires than Bram Stoker, no critic more searchingly than the Reverend Montague Summers".

Doubtless, Henry Irving's long-suffering business manager at the Lyceum would have been thrilled to discover that his "brilliance" outshone that of such lesser mortals as Johann Ludwig Tieck, Heinrich von Kleist, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Charles Noddy, Prosper Mérimée, Nicolai Gogol, Théophile Gautier, Alexis Tolstoy, Alexandre Dumas, Fitz-James O'Brien, Ivan Turgenev, Sheridan LeFanu and Guy de Maupassant — all of whom had made significant contributions to the spread of the *genre vampirique* well before Bram Stoker embarked on his first (and, to some, his most significant) work *The Duties of Clerks of Petty Sessions in Ireland*. But he was a highly retired man, well aware of his own limitations as a writer, and I feel sure he would not have believed it for a minute.

Doubtless, Montague Summers would have been equally thrilled to discover that his critical perspective was more "searching" than that of more recent if less dimly-remembered commentators on the theme, such as Mario Praz, Robert Elmer, Devenish P. Varma, Tony Falvey, Dieter Sturm and Klaus Völker. Tzvetan Todorov, James Rieger, Leonard Wolf, Jean Gattegno, Gérard Stein and myself (*The Vampire, Gollancz*, 1978). But Summers — who professed to believe in vampirism, "to the point" — and who on one famous occasion mistook a popular penny-dreadful article about the phenomenon for a scholarly dissertation — would perhaps have felt rather uneasy about being associated with the less reputable fraternity.

Clearly, A.N. Wilson has not looked carefully enough at either the distinguished contributions to the sub-genre which pro-

duced *Dracula*, or the many critical surveys which have been published since 1929: if he had he might have known that Monk Lewis and Charles Robert Maturin *did* in fact "choose to write about vampires"; that *Varney the Vampire* was the work of James Malcolm Rymer (rather than "a work of composite authorship, nominally by Thomas Peckett Prest"); and that Lafanu's Countess Karstein spelt her name with a "K".

Why is it, I wonder, that when reviewers deign to write about *grands saigneurs* and *femmes sanguines*, they almost invariably feel impelled to rely on a mixture of shoddy scholarship and facetious "asides", as a substitute for critical analysis? Is it possible that, like Jonathan Harker, they are all "encompassed about with terrors that they dare not think of . . .?"

CHRISTOPHER FRAYLING.

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The Tichborne Jury

Sir, — The Victorian jurymen pictured on page 328 of the TLS of March 27 look somewhat gloomy. No wonder. They were empaneled in that jury box listening to the Tichborne case for 188 days. But Gail Buckland is surely in error in describing this as the earliest photograph of a jury. As your caption correctly states, there were not one, but two Tichborne trials. The first was the Claimant's civil action for ejectment — that is his claim to the estate — which ran from May 1871 to March 1872 and resulted in the rejection of his claim. The second trial was a criminal prosecution of the Claimant, lasting from April 1873 until February 1874, which found him guilty of perjury and forgery.

The jury in the photograph you publish heard the second Tichborne trial. There is a slightly different picture of this jury on page 237 of Douglas Woodruff's *The Tichborne Claimant* (Hollis and Carter, 1957). But on the same page there is also a photograph of the jury at the first Tichborne trial. This latter photograph must be at least a year older than the one Gail Buckland claims to be the earliest surviving photograph of a jury.

GEORGE D.M. BLOCK.

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György Faludy

Sir, — I found George Mikes's eulogy on the *Collected Poems* of the Hungarian émigré poet György Faludy (March 27) very disturbing. The reason for this is not my dislike of Faludy's poetry (he is a fine Romantic poet who has written, on occasion, memorable lines on political and personal themes) but the terms in which Mr Mikes expressed his admiration. One cannot but wonder whether Faludy is really "Hungary's greatest living poet" — I, for one, could quote four or five names offhand to prove that this view is not based on critical consensus in or outside Hungary. To make things worse, Mr Mikes's review consists of personal reminiscences and plenty of biographical details about Mr Faludy but, in my opinion, is lacking in critical analysis; we never learn what makes him a better poet than Weöres or Pilinsky.

Towards the end of his review Mr Mikes reiterates his claim about Faludy's greatness: "Faludy is the only major poet of this age who can — and does — speak freely. In such circumstances only an émigré can be the greatest poet of his country." This, I am afraid, is completely untenable. One can be a great poet living under the shadow of the worst totalitarian regime — witness Pasternak or Mandelstam — and a mediocrity in the most liberal and democratic of societies. By making such a claim Mr Mikes unwittingly joins forces with Zhdanov — as a Stalinist *la rétro* — for as we know the best social system must unfailingly produce the greatest literature.

GEORGE GÓMÖRI.

Darwin College, Cambridge.

Poetry as a Profession

Sir, — Gordon Symes's letter (March 13) doubts "the existence of professional poets" and wants to "dispense with this curious snobbery altogether", since "What-ever 'professional' might mean, it cannot add anything of value or relevance to our estimation of poets or poetry. A poet is anyone who has produced one or more good poems, however few and infrequently".

What "professional" might mean must surely tend towards the sort of person who, like a practising professional anything, produces "more good poems" and more than infrequently. Without going quite so far as my fellow professional, Pete Brown, who submits there should be " . . . farms for poets/poets should be like cow/milked (twice a day) and those that don't produce should be eaten"; most of us would, I hope,

The London Magazine

Sir, — Roy Fuller and eight other distinguished authors, artists, etc. have signed an appeal printed in your pages (Letters, February 13) on behalf of *London Magazine*, asking £10,000 in contributions to help the publication pay the legal costs in a settled defamation action "not of its seeking". The magazine's editor, Alan Ross, is not among the signers. Given the circumstances, I well understand why. The defamation action sprang from an article he published about me in *London Magazine's* July 1978 issue. Its allegations were so baseless, its language so scurrilous, that I was too upset to answer personally. However, neither a letter from Truman Capote, sent in August 1978, denying that he had made the aspersions attributed to him by the article's concocter, nor any of numerous subsequent letters sent by other people over the next year, were mentioned or published in *London Magazine*. These latter letters, from editors and authors as diverse as William Maxwell and Mario Soldati, pointed out to Mr Ross the gross untruth of the article's representation of my character and actions. When writes were served on Mr Ross in April 1979, it was made clear to his solicitors as soon as they responded that I was not seeking damages but only a retraction of the article's libels. The action dragged on for nearly two years, without Mr Ross offering a word of excuse or apology or publishing the retraction I asked for. I do not know under what circumstances a defendant in a libel suit can be said to "seek" an action against himself; but if Mr Ross did not deliberately seek my suit, he did in fact libel me. Most of the legal fees owed by *London Magazine* are due to the delay before he agreed to apologize. Even the initial fees could have been avoided by his having exercised some editorial caution in ascertaining, before he put them into print, the veracity of the article's ten pages of allegations against me — not the least of which was that I had published another author's letters to me without his having assigned me the rights, a crime punishable in the United States by a \$10,000 fine and a year's imprisonment.

I share the signatories' regret at the prospective loss of any publication devoted to art and literature; but I hope that their request for contributions to relieve *London Magazine's* "present misfortune" does not imply their approval of such editorial conduct, or suggest that an author should not make use of the legal means available to him for redress against unrettracted libels.

DONALD NEWDHAM.
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Writers and Pilgrims

Sir, — Valerie Adams's review of my book *Writers and Pilgrims* (March 13) might have carried more conviction if she had her facts straight. In denying so hotly that the book was what I called it, "an aerial view of a forgotten genre", she mistook a disclaimer for a claim: an "aerial view" of a subject, as I should have thought was evident, gives the outlines but little detail — it's just a way of saying what I said on the next page, "I haven't meant to do more in this small book than introduce the subject". She adds that I mention "a few of the better-known accounts"; mention over thirty and few are well known.

I puzzled me that she thinks I "abandon" my claim that the pilgrimage narratives are useful analogues to *The Canterbury Tales*. Her imagined moment of abandonment comes when I say a pilgrimage was at once a metaphor and a real journey, and that was precisely the basis for the claim.

A greater puzzle: the irritable Ms Adams says I did not "comment on one of the interesting features shared by Mandeville and some of the pilgrims — the nonchalant, teasing attitude towards the reader about credibility". I don't find this in the pilgrim writers, but I do comment on it in Mandeville, for example on pages 61 and 90. Let the reader look for himself.

Incidentally, Ms Adams's example of Mandeville's teasing (the passage where he visits Rome on his way home and has his book "proved for true" by the Pope) was not written by Mandeville. It is, as she might have found from the notes in the Seymour edition and elsewhere, an interpolation found only in English manuscripts. Or she might just have stopped to think about Sir John showing a book to

The conqueror's course

By David Hunt

ROBIN LANE FOX:
The Search for Alexander
448pp. Allen Lane. £12.95.
0 7139 1395 9

In 1973 Robin Lane Fox published a long, highly-written and detailed biography of Alexander the Great which won several literary prizes. He was then just five years older, at twenty-seven, than his hero was when he set out to invade the Persian empire. Now thirty-five years old (Alexander died at thirty-three) he has a second book to his credit which supplements and in part modifies the first. It could also be called a colour supplement. The illustrations, of which there are 220, 135 of them in colour, are not only elucidatory of the text but objects of beauty in themselves. It is a sumptuous book, printed in the United States, whose colour plates set a high standard for its moderate price.

There are advantages in having a biography of so youthful a conqueror presented by someone of a similar age. All historians agree that Alexander was a man of restless vigour, desiring to battle, passionate and violent in his private life, far-ranging in his intellectual curiosity. In his writing Mr Lane Fox shows an appropriate veneer. At the same time it must be emphasized that this is a serious history. The formal apparatus of footnotes and references is missing—though the bibliography demonstrates the wealth of scholarship available—but the reader can feel assured that there is authority for everything in the narrative and that the general picture presented is perfectly orthodox.

The pictures which give the book its special value come from the two ends of Alexander's empire: from Vergina in Macedonia and Ai Khanum in the Afghan province of Badkhashan, by the banks of the Oxus. Both sets illustrate very recent discoveries. Vergina is Aegae, a former royal capital; the identification was first put forward by N. G. L. Hammond in 1968 and clinched by Professor Andronikos's announcement in 1977 of the discovery there of royal tombs. Lane Fox without equivocation claims the principal one for Philip II Alexander's father: "the evidence is far stronger than for many views which ancient historians have

where Sandy and Sikander are popular names. He figures in the Koran, as earlier in the Book of Daniel, as the Man with the two Horns, no doubt because of the coin portraits in which he wears the ram's horns of the god Ammon. There is a mountain called after him, Gebel Bou Kournine, that stands across the bay from Tunis. On the day we took the city in 1943 I pointed out the coincidence to another conquering Alexander, from County Tyrone; and when I was in Pakistan in the 1950s I knew a Mir of Hunza, ruler of a mountain state beyond Gilgit, who claimed descent from Alexander; falsely, alas, since he had no direct descendants, but evidence of the survival of his memory.

The authentic history of Alexander is largely military history. A large part of the skill required for his extraordinary success was devoted to logistics. Here the photographs of the landscapes of the long march are specially evocative when read

in conjunction with the frequent route maps; but of course there is never much to say about logistics until something breaks down. Alexander had only one failure: his march along the coast of Baluchistan on the way back from India; and for that unusual weather can be blamed, probably correctly. On the tactics of the great battles Lane Fox writes summarily, claiming that it is impossible to get a clear picture even from accounts by participants. He makes one point which upsets the usual picture of the Macedonian army: he shows that the famous phalanx, with its sixteen-foot pikes, was never decisive in any of the great victories because of its tendency to lose formation when faced with irregularities of the ground or forced to move too quickly. It was, then, the cavalry that won the battles, in fact and not merely in the flattery of historians concentrating on the arm that was led by the king. It would in any case have been as natural for them as

it was for the artists to concentrate on the figure of the young leader dubbing straight at the enemy at the decisive point. The same courage was shown in the less stimulating operations of siege work; at the capital of the Mallot in India, Alexander was the first up the ladder and when he broke he jumped down, not to safety, but into the town.

For all his admiration for his hero, Lane Fox does full justice to his enemies, indeed this is the best short appreciation of the Achaemenid empire in its later stages that I know. It was not as ramshackle as the Greeks thought at the time and as some modern historians have described it; the administration remained loyal and there were no desertions from the army until all was plainly lost. It has always been difficult to comprehend the full magnitude of Alexander's achievements; this book makes it almost impossible to detract from them.

Subversive sensationalists

By Patricia Craig

WINIFRED HUGHES:
The Maniac in the Cellar
Sensation Novels of the 1860s
211pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £8.40
0 691 06441 5

Madness was put to a great many dramatic uses in the fiction of the last century, as present-day critics are discovering. The first Mrs Rochester, raving and rampaging behind a locked door, provided an image which gave Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar a title for their 1979 study of women writers and the nineteenth-century literary imagination: *The Madwoman in the Attic*. Now it is necessary to descend a couple of floors to come upon another representative literary figure, the product of an imagination rather more lurid than Charlotte Brontë's. *The Maniac in the Cellar*. These are both illuminating titles. The first stands for repressed female energies, the second for despised imaginative energies.

The ludicrously deranged person — typically, a gibbering lunatic — looms large in the ordinary popular novels of the 1860s; but Winifred Hughes's title is actually taken from a parody of 1863 which appeared in the *Examiner*.

But think of the shifts and perplexities of a wife with eight husbands, being not only mysteriously married like Aurora Floyd to her noble husband's horse-trainer, but also to the Emperor of China, ... also ... to the postman, ... also to a maniac whom she keeps in the cellar.

"Medea Blenkinsop, or, The Octopussy" is the title of this imaginary novel. *Punch*, naturally enough, was also quick to take a swipe at the current sensation craze; in 1863 it came up with "Mokeanna; Or, the White Witness", an eventful serial story in which a deadwalking donkey leads the way to "the Secret Trust" (an obvious allusion, as Hughes points out, to Wilkie Collins's "Secret Trust" in *No Name*).

The parodies are hardly more preposterous than the genre itself. Nothing if not eclectic, sensationalism owed something to gothic romance, to stage melodrama, to the "pallows" or Newgate novel of the 1830s and 40s, even to the domestic story of the mid-century which it supplanted as a form of popular reading. From the last it took the evocation of staid family life which preceded its statutory convolutions of plot and counter-plot. Winifred Hughes is knowledgeable about its origins and perceptive about its implications, though she goes too far when she asserts that "the juxtaposition of fantasy and realism ... results here from a sometimes frenzied attempt to penetrate the dense surfaces of the realist world, to release its hidden energies and exorcise its fears, to confront realities beyond the everyday." This is altogether too grandiose a claim for a category of fiction that includes Mrs Henry Wood's *East Lynne*.

However, Winifred Hughes is undoubtedly right when she classifies sensationalism as "a perplexing hybrid ... fossilized in a state of transition". A too plentiful supply of corpses, coffins and cretina may have made a dead end as far as literature was concerned; but it was, at least in part, the product of a moderate social disaffection and of dissatisfaction with the fixed moral code of old-fashioned melodrama and its offshoots. Of those who would claim sociological significance for its key words, the feminists have made out the most striking case. "For the Victorian woman, secrecy was simply a way of life. The sensationalists made crime and violence domestic, modern and suburban; but their secrets were not simply solutions to mysterious crimes; they were the secrets of women's dislike of their roles as daughters, wives and mothers." This was the claim of Elaine Showalter in *A Literature of Their Own* (1977). And, referring to M. E. Braddon's celebrated novel *Lady Audley's Secret*, she adds: "the bizarre little governess." This is indeed subversion with a vengeance.

Winifred Hughes professes to associate the genre, where possible, with more specific reformist aims (reform of the laws relating to insanity, for instance, in the case of Charles Reade's *Notorious*), but she notes the telling observation of the *Christian Remembrancer* critic who complained that the violent, self-willed and murderous heroines of M. E. Braddon

"ominously fulfill the role of 'the ordinary feminine ideal'." What affronts the *Remembrancer* is a sign of progressiveness for present-day commentators on the lookout for surreptitious deviations from the discredited conventions of the past.

It is difficult to find anything interestingly subversive in *East Lynne*, aside from the assumption that profligacy represents a universal temptation for wives, and one that calls for the strongest deterrents. These Mrs Henry Wood is happy to enumerate. Her novel has a simple moral: that illicit passion breeds nothing but distress. "Whatever trials may be the lot of your married life ... resolve to bear them," she exhorts her readers. Those who don't thus resolve, might expect to suffer disfigurement in a train crash, among other miseries. Lady Isabel Carlyle (Wood's heroine) provides the awful example. At the climax of the book her son dies, and the most absurd extremes of pathos and emotional suffering surround this event. Mrs Wood turns the death of little William into a full-blown farce, complete with tears, torment, and thoughts of Jesus. Full retribution is exacted from the sinful mother, whose child has no idea who she is. Hysterical earnestness usually has a comic side, but not in *East Lynne*, which is an

exceptionally dispiriting work. It's hard to laugh at something so flagrantly morbid and sadistic. In *Poor Monkey* (a study of children in literature, published in 1957), Peter Coveney surely speaks for every modern reader when he doubts whether anything "quite so essentially nasty could ever pass itself off as serious literature again".

M. E. Braddon, a much more cheerful and bolshier author, never made the mistake of taking her dramatic concoctions too seriously. "It seems you want the right-down sensational", she wrote to her editor at Temple Bar, "title-deeds under the carpet, and a part of the body putrefying in the coal scuttle." Miss Braddon (the mother of five illegitimate children, incidentally) knew that her readers could take any amount of implausibility as long as it was sufficiently entertaining. They wanted dark secrets and horrid passions, distraught innocents and venemous villainy; and all these came easily within Miss Braddon's scope. Her success was instantaneous and her style was quickly imitated. Among her followers was Rhoda Broughton (not mentioned, oddly enough, in *The Maniac in the Cellar*), whose novel *Comeup As a Flower* (1867) prompted Mortimer Collins to deplore the current taste for the silly heroine "who cometh up as a flower or

throweth her husband down a well".

After dealing competently and comprehensively with the background, Winifred Hughes goes on to consider at length the work of four major sensationalists: Braddon, Wood, Reade and Wilkie Collins. In Reade's extraordinary novels, people hang themselves with pocket handkerchiefs from prison windows; they fall down in violent fits, and are carried home raving; the flesh withers on their bones and their veins are filled with molten fire (or some equivalent substance). They sit in locked rooms writing letters in blood with a toothpick. They are maltreated in asylums, forced to disentangle themselves from the arms of licentious matrons ("If anything could have made him pine more to be let out of the horrid place, this voluptuous prospect would"), and feel their blood converted into boiling poison (molten fire?). Indeed, in Reade's work it is not only the characters' blood that is so peculiarly liable to overheating. The author's emotions too are for ever on the boil.

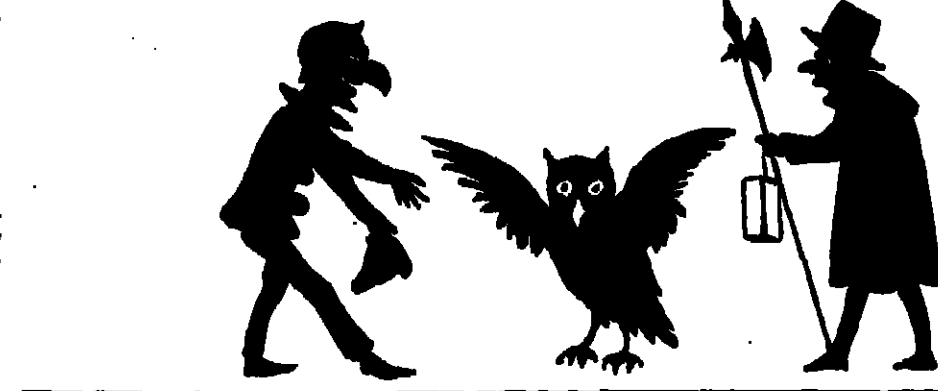
Wilkie Collins's narrative material is certainly better organized, even if it is nearly as highly coloured as Reade's. One of the striking things about Collins's fiction (like M. E. Braddon's) is its covert repudiation of certain cherished Victorian concepts like respectability and evangelical

morality: this adds pungency to the usual lavish trappings of the genre, which Collins employs without restraint: the Secret Trusts, the intriguing conspiracies, the prophetic dreams in seventeen segments. He is much closer to Dickens than any of the other authors whose work is discussed — indeed nearly fit to be considered in the mainstream of Victorian writing.

Winifred Hughes ends her study with a chapter on the influences of the sensation novel, and notes how its various elements were eventually dispersed among other kinds of light fiction, mysterious occurrences being allocated to the thriller, detecting to the detective story, and so on. She might, though she doesn't, have given some space to the American writer Anna Katharine Green, whose crime fiction (beginning in 1878) provides the clearest link between the elaborate sensation formula and the austere detective pattern which evolved in the twentieth century. Also missing is the Irish eccentric Amanda McKillick Ros whose novels of the 1890s show a belated sensationalist impulse in a most extravagant and peculiar form:

"Leave me now, deceptive demon of deluded mockery; lurk no more around the vale of vanity, like a vindictive viper: strike the lyre of living deception to the strains of dull deadness, despair and doubt."

Mrs Ros is perhaps the funniest of all the half-literate authors who ever suffered from delusions of proficiency. But Winifred Hughes, it's true, is not too concerned with the humorous aspects of her subject. She can start off the summary of a rather startling plot in the most straightforward way: "The murderer's son, who goes by the alias of Oslas Midwinter ...". There isn't too much to laugh at in *The Maniac in the Cellar*, apart from the engaging epigraphs which are taken from *Punch*. Winifred Hughes is a conscientious critic and her book is informative, orderly, and agreeable in tone. But it is a curiously sober study of an impassioned genre.



Significant subtexts

By Robert Bernard Martin

WILLIAM E. BUCKLER:
The Victorian Imagination
Essays in Aesthetic Exploration
382pp. New York University Press.
\$29.95 (paperback, \$11.70).
0 8147 1032 8

After the death of her beloved Consort, Queen Victoria spent a good many bleak days at Windsor and Osborne, moving up her copy of *In Memoriam*, moving sea up around, changing the gender of pronouns, silencing adjectives to make the text more relevant to her own bereavement.

It was only an extreme example of what we all do more covertly with literature, whether as critics or readers, translating and tailoring to make it fit more closely our own emotions and thoughts. Recognizing that they must always differ, William Buckler writes that the text of critical writing is whether there is "a reasonably exact overlay of the perceptions of the critic on the perceptions of the author". In the case of the Queen the overlay was a bit sloppy, certainly arbitrary.

Professor Buckler, who has been a prominent critic of Victorian literature for a quarter of a century, has in this valuable new volume assembled seven essays printed elsewhere and added ten more to them, to make clear his own method of overlaying his perceptions on those of Carlyle, Tennyson, Swinburne, Pater, and Hardy. It is a method as peculiar to him as Victoria's was to her, one in which he sees him gallantly accommodating the formalistic criticism of the past decade to the nagging awareness of the present, intellectual, even autobiographical concerns so stubbornly insignificant in our own day. It is a mark of the flexibility of his mind that he realizes that a critical failure with a text is an indictment of the method used, not of the literature with which it is concerned.

No dates are given for the first appearance of the previously published essays, so that it is not easy to trace a chronological track in Buckler's thinking, but he seems to have been cautiously attracted to formalism, then made wary of its apparent limitations. Certainly he betrays no need to be doctrinaire or rigidly consistent in his criticism.

The general pattern—it is awkward in this context to say structure—of his essays is to set out initially the apparent, announced, or traditional way of looking at a work, and then to indicate what seems to him the true (perhaps intentional, perhaps not) subtext; not surprisingly, the subtext often turns out to be the relation between language and society. After this he analyses the work in detail in a positive spray of evocative impressions, returning to more sober prose at the conclusion. I don't know whether the regularity of this pattern is deliberate, but Professor Buckler can hardly mind a reader's looking beyond his intention.

With such a personal, even idiosyncratic method at work, it is not surprising that the book is far from even in effect, making the reader rocket back and forth between delight and near-despair.

First the bad news. Possibly forgetting that in *Essentials of Rhetoric* he wrote that language could mean no more than it communicated to the reader, Buckler now seems to believe with Humphry Dumpty that words mean what he chooses them to mean. Like others brushed with formalism, he seems unable to accommodate his perceptions in standard English and has turned away from denotative language to connotative. The result frequently makes one apprehensive about how sensitive he can be to language. Mixed metaphors, tautologies, literal repetitions, redundancies, embarrassingly dated slang, discarded jargon from sociology litter the ground almost-deep. It is hard to believe that once he wrote well about appropriate fiction and levels of usage.

But that was fifteen years ago. Today important works are pedestals documents, manilines, or mind-blowing exp documents. Or they may be penings or writing-acts, to be perceived by reading-acts that become lessons if the

reader manages to cope with their universal coordinates; otherwise they are self-destructing. Nor are we spared true truth, deep profundity, internal centres, or "dormancy, and sleep". Within four pages there are two self-indulgent sentences of twenty-nine lines each (is it coincidental that both concern Arnold?). "Swinburne's attack upon the high-Farassian torpor of the 1860s", we are told, "lightened the sphincters of those in charge—like a firebrand buried into a costume ball of papier-mâché; and in retrospect it seems brilliantly strategic." Of the suicide of Lucretia it is said that "this experience is unprecedented for him", and reprehensibly for a knight of the Round Table, the too self-critical Ball "habitually treats himself to torrents of self-abuse". There are many misspellings and several scores of misprints of a kind unworthy of either the distinguished publishers or the price of the book.

And yet, in this case at least, the style is some distance from being the man. At his best Buckler is wonderfully perceptive in seeing through the surface of a poem or novel to the real concerns activating the author. "*Marius the Epicurean*: Beyond Victorianism" is one of the most illuminating studies I know of how Pater sought to ease both "the burden of the past (what one does with so rich an inheritance) and the burden of the present (how one relates art to life)". Buckler is very good too on Swinburne as a religious mediator between ancient faith

and modern scepticism that weakens the inherited costumes of belief. It would be tempting to think that he is at his easiest with the masters of inflated rhetoric like Carlyle, Pater, and Swinburne were it not that his intense veneration for Hardy (far behind the most distinguished essay in the book, "The Dark Space Illumined", in which he convincingly shows that the subtext of Hardy's banishing "quest for a lost spouse", his "Poema of 1912-13", written after the death of his wife Emma, is an amalgam of the great regenerative myths of Dido and Aeneas, Orpheus and Eurydice, Alceas and Admetus, and Tristram and Isolde).

For my taste the eight essays on Tennyson, although they are full of good things, such as very shrewd observations on the function of the intercalary songs of *The Princess*, come off less well, probably because Tennyson's poetry is not always amenable to Buckler's method. It is only the dunes, Tennyson once told Edmund Gosse, who "fancy it is the thought that makes poetry live; it isn't, it's the expression, the form, but we mustn't tell them so, they wouldn't know what we meant". Buckler does not make that mistake, but he sometimes neglects Tennyson's clear intention to write something that was not prose. The present volume narrowly misses its distinction not because of its thought but because of what Tennyson thought of as the form. Like Queen Victoria, Professor Buckler too often looks great imaginative works into private language.

S. J. Newman's Dickens at Play (131 pp. Macmillan, £12, 033261534) makes noisy claims for Dickens's early novels. "*The Old Curiosity Shop*" is a revolution in the history of the novel; *Barnaby Rudge* is "post-modernist rather than pre-modernist" and full of startling pleasures. If that is the word: Dennis the excommunicator speaks of "working off" his victims, and Mr Newman comments, "working oneself off is well worn slang for masturbation, and Dennis's addition to the phrase suggests a psychological connection in Dickens's mind between hanging and self-abuse as signs of displaced libido".

Martin Chuzzlewit occasions further extravagances: it is the "most blatantly brilliant expression of comic energy in Western fiction" and "with *Bleak House*

JOHN BATCHELOR

From Roman to sub-Roman

By W. H. C. Frend

CHARLES THOMAS:
Christianity in Roman Britain to AD 500
408pp. Batsford. £14.95.
0 7134 1442 1

"The assertion of this book has been one of continuity — in some fashion Christianity continued, and with it, we have to suppose an element of spoken vulgar Latin, alongside spoken British, and even more, written Latin". Moreover, continuity spreading out from the old south-east was "most detectable in all those regions where the record is not otherwise dominated by the evidence of Saxon presence." Thus Charles Thomas sums up his magisterial study of Christianity in Roman and sub-Roman Britain, a major attempt to bridge the first decades of the "Dark Ages" of British history, which extends from the last appeal of the Britons to the Roman imperial authorities in the person of Aethelstan in 446 to somewhere around 550, when the Anglo-Saxons emerged as the unchallenged possessors of the richest parts of the island.

The problems of research into the early history of Christianity in the British Isles are daunting. Apart from monographs on Patrick, scholars have preferred to confine their studies to articles in learned journals. While one may be tolerably certain that Christianity reached these shores sometime during the first half of the third century and that, by the time of the Council of Arles in 314, Britain shared the same episcopal organization that prevailed in other western provinces, the ensuing period of growth and development is wrapped in obscurity. In the fourth century, Britain lacked any known Christian leader. There was no Hilary of Poitiers to defy a heretical emperor, no Martin of Tours to destroy rural paganism, and no Prudentius to record the heroic era of faith in these islands. There are thus practically no literary records concerning the Church in Roman Britain, and while elsewhere in the West, churches may be numbered in scores, only two indubitable churches, at Silchester and Rieborough, have so far been identified in Britain. The memory even of these failed to survive the Anglo-Saxon invasions. Christian villas also perished without trace. Yet the family of Patrick, representing a middle stratum of

Romano-British society, had been Christian for three generations when the saint was seized by Irish raiders in perhaps c. 420. Britain, moreover, has produced outstanding archaeological discoveries, such as the Maidenhead and Water Newton treasures and the wall-paintings at Lullingstone, pointing to a Church that did not lack wealthy adherents and could claim a sophisticated art and liturgy.

With some reservations, the author has risen to the challenge of bringing coherence into this uncoordinated but impressive scatter of evidence. His *Early Christian Archaeology in Northern Britain* (1971) has prepared the ground for this major work, as well as limiting it to the period before the establishment of monastic predominance in the Celtic Church during the sixth century. To a firm grasp of the archaeology of late-Roman Britain, Thomas has added the scholarship both of the historian and the student of language and place-names. The emphasis throughout is on interdisciplinary study as the sole effective means of unravelling the problems raised by the transition of Roman to sub-Roman Britain. The case he presents has been long considered and is cogently argued. Very little of the archaeological material has escaped him. The careful cataloguing and weighing of evidence enables him to lay firmer foundations for mapping the progress of Christianity than any of his predecessors. The tribute he pays to C. A. Ralegh Radford as inspirer of these studies is apt.

The impression he leaves is, that by the first decades of the fifth century, Christianity was relatively evenly spread through the four provinces of Roman Britain, with concentrations in the south-east, among the villa-owning landowners of Dorset and Gloucestershire, on the borders of the Pennines around Water Newton and Icklingham, and at the western end of Hadrian's Wall. Despite the continued vigour of paganism in central and south-western Britain, the new religion was gaining ground. Even amid the havoc caused by the barbarian invasions, its continuity with that of a large part of the Romano-British population may be assumed.

In his later chapters, devoted to the missions of Ninian and Patrick respectively, Thomas feels his way carefully through the quicksands of controversial and uncertain evidence. What were the precise challenges against Patrick? Was there a Whitburn bishopric serving as the missionary centre for evangelizing southern Scotland? Whatever the answer, he believes that, "roughly between 400 and 600 AD these British kingdoms in the southern Scotland became Christian", with an episcopal organization, Patrick, also, he sees as a "bishop sent by the British Church to Irish Christians". He was not the founder of Irish monasticism. The introduction of Mediterranean-influenced monasticism into coastal sites of south-west Britain around 475 opens a new, post-Roman chapter in the religious history of these islands.

Such is the framework created with painstaking thoroughness for a new understanding of early British Christianity. There are imperfections. The book is too long; too much space is given to didactic and speculative argument; theological issues, such as Pelagianism in

In face of evidence of its relative lack, emphasized by the abandonment even of its buildings in the fifth century, one wonders whether the episcopally and western (not "Roman") oriented Church in Britain may not have suffered more from the transition from Roman provincial Christianity to Celtic kingdoms after the fifth century than it did from the Anglo-Saxons. How would Thomas fit the hanging bowls with their rich Celtic ornamentation into his scheme of continuity? E. T. Leeds long ago pointed out that these were the single most obvious reminders of a Celtic resurgence that included lowland Britain. Did this article revival reflect Christianization, as analogous movements did elsewhere in the period, or its opposite?

These queries however, must be balanced against Professor Thomas's achievement. A great deal of valuable information has been assembled and assessed. He has appreciated how the detailed study of early Christianity in Britain provides the best hope of penetrating the obscurity of the "Dark Ages". Continuity, even if represented only by the surviving cult of St Alban at Verulamium, there must be. More information will surely come from research on major sites in the future. York, Lincoln, and London must have more to add. Finally, the author has shown that whatever the merits of specialist and sectional approaches in other fields of scholarship, the history of late antiquity can be reconstructed only through interdisciplinary studies. This finely produced and excellently informed book will remain the standard work on early Christianity in Britain for a long time to come.

To coincide with the recent television series the BBC has published Michael Wood's *In Search of the Dark Ages* (244pp. BBC Publications, £8.95, 0 563 17835 3). Mr Wood's obvious enthusiasm for his subject has been transferred to the chapters of this book. The text follows the history of Britain from the time of the Romans to the Norman Conquest, covering Boadicea, Arthur, "The Sution Foo Man", Offa, Alfred the Great, Athelstan, Eadred, Eadwig, Edgar the Unready and William the Conqueror.

Sharing the guests

By E.A. Thompson

WALTER GOFFART:
Barbarians and Romans AD 418-894
The Techniques of Accommodation
293pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £14.
0 691 05303 0

When entire barbarian peoples—the Visigoths, say, or the Burgundians—broke into the Roman Empire, the Imperial authorities in the fifth century were often too weak to throw them out again, and so they devised a scheme whereby they made skilful use of the intruders. They planted them in the countryside, the Visigoths in Aquitaine in south-western France, the Burgundians in Savoy, and others elsewhere. By giving them a stake in the country in which they lived, the Emperor provided themselves with an efficient defence force; the wall-less barbarians could not defend their own interests without defending at the same time the interests of the Roman landowners among whom they had been planted. Moreover, what had hitherto been wandering and hostile masses of aliens now became settled populations of cultivators of the soil. The security of south-western Gaul and of Savoy was thus against enemies within or without the frontiers.

What has given rise to much discussion among historians during the past century and a half is the question of how exactly the Romans settled the barbarians on the land. The settlement in each case was an act of Roman, not barbarian, policy. The Visigoths themselves and the Burgundians are not said even to have been consulted on the matter. Moreover, the great Roman landowners of the affected areas

acquiesced in the scheme. We hear of no protests and no resistance on their part, and indeed it is highly unlikely that the Imperial government would have introduced any scheme that might have damaged these men's interests.

And yet the Visigothic settler received two-thirds of the arable of the estate on which he was planted together with two-thirds of the woodland and an unknown proportion of the pasture-land and of the slaves. The Patrician Aetius, a great champion of the landed aristocracy, settled the Burgundians in Savoy in 443. Our information here is a little fuller than it is in the case of the Visigoths. The Burgundians "great" (as he was euphemistically called) received two-thirds of the arable land of the estate which he was to share with his Roman overlord, and he was also given one-third of the slave labour of the estate and one-half of the woodland, the pasture, the farm-buildings, and the orchards. The serfs were transferred, of course, with the land that they tillied.

Why was there no protest from the landowners of the affected areas? Aquitaine contained the estates of many very rich and influential aristocrats, and it was precisely these that were partitioned. There is little likelihood that small and medium farms were affected at all; the smaller the farm, the less profitable a partition would have been to the "guest", and the nearer the Roman farmer would have come to total expropriation—and it was certainly not the government's intention to expropriate Roman farmers. The most likely explanation—though it has been disputed—seems to be that the estate-owners were severely and immediately threatened by peasant revolts, and were prepared to surrender a fraction of their estates rather than lose the whole of them. The barbarian settlers now had an

little use as the Roman landowners for rebellious peasants.

All this, or something like it, is the traditional view. There has been much discussion of details, but the general outline has been agreed upon. But now Walter Goffart of Toronto has put forward a wholly new interpretation of our scanty sources. According to him, the Roman government gave the barbarians, not fractions of the estates themselves, but the tax revenues payable on these fractions. There was no great change in the ownership of the land. The landowners agreed to the settlements because they lost nothing whatever and certainly no land, and they gained protection. It was the government itself which lost: it lost some of its income from taxes.

Professor Goffart argues his case glowingly, forcefully, and at length. He has the ancient sources—such as they are—at his fingertips. He writes well. (I would like to think that "nonreportorial" on page 63 is a misprint, but it isn't.) Yet I doubt if many students of these matters will accept his thesis. It is hardly conceivable that the laws would speak of fractions of tribute, pasture, and so on, if what they meant was the taxes payable thereon by the Roman owners. And what about the Church historian who says that the land was given to the barbarians *et georgian*, "for farming"? And what of all the laws which give to the barbarians in an agricultural context, setting traps for wild animals, complaining that cattle have made their way into the vineyards, and so on, and so on?

This is a stimulating book. It is very detailed. It forces us to look at old problems in a new way, and it has a lot to teach us incidentally. But its main theses are very much open to question.

John Batchelor

Ancestral allotments

By John Buxton

TERESA McLEAN
Medieval English Gardens
298pp. Collins. £12.50.
0 00 211335 2

"Nothing worthy of the name of a garden existed in Britain before the Roman Conquest", was the opinion of the Hon Mrs Evelyn Cecil, who devoted the first three chapters of her *History of Gardening in England* to medieval gardens. (Oddly enough Teresa McLean does not refer to this famous book.) The earliest evidence we have of an English garden, at the Roman villa at Fishbourne in Sussex, was still undiscovered in Mrs Cecil's day. That villa was almost certainly built for a British client king, Cogidubnus, and had a formal colonnaded garden on one side and an informal garden stretching down to the shore on the other. The lay-out of the garden is clear enough, but what plants were grown there is unknown.

This remains the pattern of our knowledge of gardens until very recent times: we have evidence of walls and paths, of alleys and mounds and parterres, but not of the plants. Monastic and institutional and household accounts maddeningly record expenses on "seeds" or "plants" or "shrubs" or "trees" without identifying them. The elaborate research undertaken by Miss McLean must have been continually frustrating for this very reason, and she is to be congratulated on having found so much information in primary sources. Her book is very thorough, well arranged — and written in a tiresomely colloquial manner. (The hospitaliers and Templars were "endowed with quite a bit of property" in England, but "we don't know what grew in the gardens", and so on.) But it is an authoritative book and one must be grateful for what is provided.

Pliny, we learn, remarked on the enormous number of herbs known and used by the British and to have derived the name *Aleion* from the profusion of white roses which the Romans found here. (But surely this is more likely to have been the burnet rose, *R. pratincola*, than *Rosa alba*, which is not native. If it had already been introduced from the Continent then we must antedate the beginning of gardening here.) Pliny and *Cogidubnus* were contemporaries, and the formal garden at Fishbourne must have had in it flowers grown for their beauty of form or colour or scent, and not only plants grown for their culinary or medicinal use. When the Romans left, gardening, like most other civilized pleasures, presumably declined; but no doubt the growing of beans (broad beans) and peas, of leeks and onions, and of the native fruits of apple, pear, plum and cherry continued. Even vines, reputedly first planted in 280 in Hampshire, had not been entirely exterminated when Bede was writing in the early eighth century, and 350 years later the Domesday survey records thirty-eight vineyards. Even if most of them produced vinegar rather than wine this was welcome in the kitchen; and the first planting recorded at William of Wykeham's New College in Oxford, within five years of its admission of the first scholars, was of vines.

That garden, like other medieval gardens, was intended primarily for profit rather than for pleasure, though fruit trees in blossom can hardly have failed to please. At Wykeham's other foundation, in Winchester, in 1386 the College spent 9d on a pound of onion seed and 4d on garlic. Leeks, onions and garlic were favourite medieval vegetables; no doubt their pungency helped to mask other and worse smells, produced by the absence of sewers, by unattended teeth and unwashed clothes. Herbs were useful in this context also, to provide nosebags. (Pomeanders did not come in until Henry VII's time.)

The first expert medieval gardens were to be found in the monasteries, most especially among the Carthusians, whose first Charterhouse, at Witham in Somerset, was founded in 1173. Each monk had his own small private garden adjacent to his cell, and there he could grow what he chose. But other orders cultivated gardens. The Warden pear came from a Charterhouse monastery in Bedfordshire; the Benedictine abbey of Malmesbury at the end of the thirteenth century had a vineyard, a herb garden and, in the abbot's garden, some fruit trees; and the Augustinian

canons at St Botolph's Priory, Aldgate had several gardens and a vineyard. Orchards were often planted before kitchen gardens: they provided cider and perry and plums and cherries, and they needed less upkeep. A fourteenth-century Bishop of Ely had an orchard, a vineyard and a kitchen garden at his town house in Holborn; the last must have been large, for 666 yards of thorn hedging were planted in 1372 to enclose it.

Flowers were grown to decorate churches (no doubt long before they were used in houses) — Madonna lilies for feasts of the Virgin Mary, and in Lent; and at great functions such as Corpus Christi priests wore garlands and wreaths of red roses. At Easter, churches were garished with branches of yew, and on Palm Sunday with box or (as today) with willow whose catkins somehow came to be regarded as palm. At midsummer, branches of birch were used, and holly and ivy at Christmas. These garishings were of course obtainable in the woods and needed no cultivation, but the lilies and roses were garden plants.

Medieval gardening may have originated in the monasteries but it was not long before laymen planted gardens at their houses. The Bishop of Ely had a contemporary rival in Holborn, where the Earl of Lincoln had orchard, vineyard and a vegetable garden in which he grew leeks, onions, garlic, beans and hemp in sufficient quantity to be able to sell the surplus. He had a flower garden, too, from which he sold what are tantalizingly called "little plants", presumably nursery stock for other gardeners. And he sold roses (either blooms or cuttings) and vine slips. He was entreprising enough to send to the Continent for grafts of new apples, perhaps including Costard and Pearmain (which reached England in his time), and of new pears suitable for perry, for cooking and even for dessert, though apples and pears were not then often eaten raw.

No doubt other landowners introduced new plants, but whether returning Crusaders were responsible for bringing back the hollyhock, *Martagon* lily and saffron crocus is uncertain. The last, Miss McLean tells us, "still grows in abundance round the remote sites of Hospitaller houses in Yorkshire, especially their priory at Halifax", and the Templars planted the first oriental plane at Ribstone priory. But though the Temple gardens in London became famous, the Military Orders were small "and the arrangement of their houses was not particularly conducive to gardening". The monastery was another medieval introduction: one at Drapers' Hall was planted in 1364 and survived for six centuries, until wrecked by a storm; and another, in the garden of New College, which William Coles described in 1657 as "the biggest that ever I saw" was probably a near contemporary.

Made in Berkeley Square

By Peter Thornton

HELENA BAYWARD AND PAT KIRKHAM:
William and John Linnell.
Eighteenth-Century London Furniture
Makers
Volume 1, text 206pp. Volume 2, plates
170pp. Studio Vista/Christies. £45 the set.

Serious art-historical studies can only be prepared if a vast array of factual information is fairly readily available. In the last century to come by than in the fine arts, the advance has been slower, it has also been uneven. Rapid studies were made in the 1930s on those areas where appropriate information was incorporated into the objects under investigation. Silver and porcelain, both of which often bear marks indicating date and maker, soon acquired a framework of ideas and information, as people with different interests began to apply themselves to the subject. Thus to the ancient amalgam of collectors, dealers and craftsmen, backed by some mostly rather amateur historians, was now added a formidable line-up of professional historians, specialists in the economic, social, technical or archival fields.

In the case of furniture it was on French eighteenth-century products that a degree

Many of the herbs that were grown had been introduced in Roman times, and some 500 were known to the Anglo-Saxons (though not all were what we now consider herbs); they were grown for medicinal purposes, as well as for flavouring food. Medieval palaces seem to have relished hot tastes, and would doubtless have favoured curries: in the absence of refrigeration the little meat they ate was probably often spiced. Mint was used to prevent milk curdling, and many other herbs were native plants, such as thyme and marjoram and borage. Camomile was another native plant which was used for lawns, where "the more it is trodden the faster it grows" and gives off its pleasing scent. Native plants were grown in gardens, as now, for the beauty of their flowers: violets, primroses, cowslips, broom, honeysuckle, lily of the valley and Solomon's seal, but more surprisingly to us there were daisies, celandines, herb-robert and poppies. The juice of the celandine was used for the eyes, and herb-robert was reputed to be beneficial to the kidneys.

One especially attractive feature of medieval gardens was the flowery mead "wherein low-growing flowers were planted in turf lawns", which were perhaps surrounded by turf banks on which one could sit, or by a border of periwinkle (a Roman introduction). Medieval gardeners would have been distressed by our determined efforts to eradicate daisies from our lawns, and they would not have admired their closely mown texture. We, on the other hand, would have found their gardens rather dull because of the lack of variety of flowers and shrubs. But King and cottager alike enjoyed gardens then as now — Henry III in particular seems to have been much concerned with the garden at Windsor Castle: "indeed it is the purest of human pleasures. It is the greatest refreshment to the spirits of man; without which buildings and palaces are but gross handicrafts."

Miss McLean has a chapter on Love Gardens, which derived from Biblical sources, the Garden of Eden and, especially, the Song of Songs which "was the model for all the medieval romance gardens... and became the dominant image of Paradise and love", and was interpreted as an allegory of the union of the soul with God, or of the Virgin Mary with Christ. The rose, which appears in medieval carvings, as in the chapter-house at Southwell Minster, also became used more often than any other garden flower, as a symbol for the Virgin. And from the use of roses to denote a collection of hymns to the Virgin, the writers on antique English furniture have until very recently been hampered in their approach and in their pronouncements.

Two factors have helped to change all this and have raised the status of furniture studies in this country to a serious level during the past decade — the formation of the "Furniture Archive" at the Victoria and Albert Museum, which provided pigeon-holes for information that was coming in from many quarters, and the foundation of the Furniture History Society which brought together those who were interested and soon produced a rich cross-fertilization of ideas and information, as people with different interests began to apply themselves to the subject. Thus to the ancient amalgam of collectors, dealers and craftsmen, backed by some mostly rather amateur historians, was now added a formidable line-up of professional historians, specialists in the economic, social, technical or archival fields.

Helena Bayward and Pat Kirkham's book exemplifies this new and admirable level of achievement very clearly, for it is the work of two experts, one with a formidable string of publications on stylistic questions to her name, the other a historian who has made a deep study of the English eighteenth-century cabinet-making trade in all its aspects. The result of this collaboration has been an immensely fruitful and the book provides a fascinating assembly of facts, a number of soundly-based guesses, and a wealth of supporting evidence.

Estates of elegance

By Priscilla Metcalf

SUSAN BEATTIE:
A Revolution in London Housing
LCC Housing Architects and Their Work
1893-1914
127pp. Greater London Council/
Architectural Press. £6.95.
0 85139 560 0

Much of central London is a patchwork of developers' terrace-houses and council housing, and we have heard more history of the former than of the latter. Recent historians of English urban domestic architecture have not so much disparaged as ignored "housing", except for social historians of the more inhumane blocks of yesterday and today. Susan Beattie, in only a little over a hundred pages, now shows that the London County Council's "housing revolution" of 1893-1914 is part of the mainstream of English architecture.

The replacing of a moribund Metropolitan Board of Works by a reforming LCC in 1889, and the passage of a Housing of the Working Classes Act in 1890, followed by the forming of a Housing of the Working Classes Branch within the new Council's Architect's Department, brought together a lively-minded group of young men closely influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement, by Philip Webb and W. R. Lethaby, by William Morris's Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, and by the work of architects like Leonard Stokes.

The first ground on which they tested their ideas for a humane and stylish social architecture was in Shoreditch on the Boundary Street Estate, where there had been the terrible slums described in Arthur Morrison's *Child of the Jago*. Here arose a series of blocks of flats (named for some reason after Thomas Carlyle) which became a thesaurus of types and features for succeeding estates. Red brick was the chief material, but then long since adopted as a London particular by the London School Board and by the Queen Anne Revivalists. Entrances, windows, and gables had tremendous style, both exuberant and simple. Interiors were up to date for their time. Also in the years before 1914 the LCC built cottage estates in outer London much influenced by the Garden City movement. And they built one or two central London lodging-houses for single men; here Mrs Beattie's laudatory comments and beautiful external photographs of Bruce House, Westminster, all fit with present-day reports of its condition. But whatever careful internal rehabilitation and controllable social demands have followed initial elegance of design, the present

council owners of the early LCC estates can be proud.

There is a little more to it than that. In this era of conservation areas, one wishes the author had had more space to notice the LCC architects' care for surroundings. Millbank (built 1897-1902 on half the Millbank Prison site) was their most unified estate design, the one best appreciated in its day. On Erasmus Street the end blocks Gainsborough and Reynolds and the central Hogarth Buildings (all with naming bourgeoisified into — Houses since the last war) are interspersed with two excellently designed schools, very much part of the whole layout and dated by relief plaques reading "Millbank Schools 1901".

Historians of the School Board's handsome work of the 1870s and 80s are wont to say that school design declined thereafter. It was only by an Act of 1903 that the Board was to be taken over by the LCC, yet one wonders whether, around 1900, the LCC architects twisted the arms (or shall we say guided the arms) of the School Board architects to produce the Millbank Schools. This neighbourhood also then consisted of the new sugar-tycoon's classically-iced Tate Gallery, two flanking riverside sites reserved for the Army Medical Corps (one now reserved for a Turner Gallery), assorted gas works, and little houses: not yet, near by, the Page Street flats chequer-boarded within an arm's length of living in one, not yet any boy luxury flats for MPs on Marsham Street or the outside neo-Georgian of Westminster Hospital, but only the low-roofed middle south of St John's Smith Square which Canaletto saw in his Prague view of Westminster.

Above those roofs by 1902 the five and six storeys of the LCC flats must have loomed more than they do now — perhaps one reason for the rough-cast or stucco storey here and there, a gambol of Queen Anne Vernacular tried out on the Boundary Street estate, possibly to vary or diminish apparent height. Walking today along the sedate tree-lined streets which replace Jeremy Bentham's prison layout, one thinks of Henry James visiting that house of misery in the 1880s to take notes for *The Princess Casanovissa* and calling it "a worse act of violence than any it was erected to punish". In building here, the LCC (now GLC) architects came nearer to explaining that act of a previous enlightenment than they ever have since. Amid the frustrations and political pressures that bedeviled the provision of public housing today — pressures which were not part of Mrs Beattie's brief in the space allowed — she reminds us, in a skillfully condensed text with handsome photographs, that before 1914 London led the world in good inner-city mass-domestic design.

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Schools and Children's Librarian

A vital and personable Librarian is needed to fill this challenging post at Carlsbrook High School (1133 pupils, 72 staff). The successful candidate will also undertake certain duties for the County Library Service and should preferably be Chartered.

Maximum £500 removal expenses payable in appropriate cases.

Salary: AP8 £5268-£5901 (for Chartered Librarian).

Application forms and job description from the Personnel Section, County Hall, Newport, Isle of Wight. Tel: Newport 624031 Ext 127.

Closing Date: 5 May 1981

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Isle of Wight County Council

HOME EXCHANGES

Readers of the T.L.S. who want to let their own homes for a period, or to find a temporary one abroad, will in future be able to advertise the details in a special Home Exchange column in the paper. The T.L.S. is read in very many countries around the world, and especially widely read in the U.S.A., Canada and Australia — by members of the literary, publishing and academic communities. It is the ideal medium through which to arrange congenial accommodation on sabbatical or exchange visits to other countries. The rates are £8.00 per single column centimetre and £1.20 per line. For further details contact Marie Corbett on 01-637 1234 or write to:

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